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The Moral Philosophy of Francis Hutcheson

by

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## Abbreviations and Editions of Page References

- 1st Inquiry - An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue: in Two Treatises. I. Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design. (4th ed. 1738).
- Inquiry - An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue: in Two Treatises. II. Concerning Moral Good and Evil. (4th ed. 1738)
- Essay - An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions. (3rd ed. 1742).
- Illustrations - Illustrations on the Moral Sense. (Peach's ed. 1971).
- Correspondence - Letters between the Late Mr. Gilbert Burnet and Mr. Hutchinson, etc. (in Peach's ed. of 'Illustrations').
- System - A System of Moral Philosophy. (1755).
- Introduction - A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy. (3rd ed. 1764).
- Review - Price: A Review of the Principal Questions of Morals. (Raphael's ed. 1974).
- Treatise - Hume: A Treatise of Human Nature. (Selbey-Bigge's ed. 1888).

## Notes on References

All works, except the above, are referred to by the author's surname only; where more than one work by a particular author is listed in the bibliography, the relevant title is also given. For full information on any work quoted, see the bibliography.

## Notes on Quotations

In quotations from eighteenth century editions (or photo-reproductions thereof), and from Raphael's edition of the 'Review', the original spelling and punctuation has been maintained, but the italics and the

capital letters modernized. All emphasis of words or phrases in such quotations, therefore, should be considered as those of the writer of this thesis, and not of the original writers.

#### Note on Inverted Commas

Single inverted commas denote words and phrases which are mentioned (as opposed to used); double inverted commas denote phrases or sentences which are quoted verbatim.

# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate ..... John Douglas Bishop .....  
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.....

The main object of this thesis is to explain in a systematic fashion Francis Hutcheson's moral theory. Such an attempt will necessarily involve a discussion of the various philosophical problems which are inherent in his theory. For example, I discuss the issue of whether Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense is to be interpreted in an intuitionist or an emotivist fashion. It is argued that some aspects of his moral sense theory favour the former and some the latter interpretation. Hutcheson's theory of benevolence is outlined and his arguments against the psychological egoists are discussed. Perhaps the most important problem with Hutcheson's moral sense theory is the problem of motivation. Any moral theory which locates the virtue of virtuous actions in the motive from which they are done, as Hutcheson's does, will encounter problems in explaining how knowledge of right and wrong can influence us to be virtuous. Hutcheson's ingenious solution to this problem and his theory of moral motivation, which I suggest have not been adequately discussed previously to this thesis, are explicated at length. Hutcheson's criticisms of the moral rationalists are considered, as are Price's criticisms of Hutcheson. A final chapter attempts to show how the development of Hutcheson's thinking was the result of his realizing the implications of his own theories, especially his theory of moral motivation.

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## Introduction

This thesis is primarily an attempt to explicate in detail Hutcheson's moral philosophy. Hutcheson is usually remembered as being the first to develop systematically a moral philosophy based on the notion of a moral sense; but his clear presentation of a moral sense theory is not the only aspect of his thought which is worth examining. In fact, Hutcheson's writings contain interesting views on a great variety of topics, both in moral philosophy and in areas related to it. Each of the following chapters of this thesis deals with some topic central to the study of ethics.

The first topic that must be examined is Hutcheson's views on human nature, for Hutcheson wishes to argue that the origins of moral evaluation, and of the motive to virtuous actions, are to be found in human nature. He analyses human nature using primarily the categories of sensation, desires, and beliefs. One should note in particular the nature of sensations, which include both perceptions and feelings, and one should also note the relation between desires and beliefs. These aspects of his analysis of human nature have major implications for other aspects of his thought.

The third chapter examines at length the moral sense. The moral sense has a variety of important aspects to it: it perceives moral ideas, it provides the grounds for justifying moral approval, it provides us with a type of pleasure and pain, and, in a rather indirect fashion, it influences our actions. The central question raised by a discussion of these topics is whether or not all of the

roles played by the moral sense are mutually compatible. There can be no simple statement of the concept of the moral sense as it is found in Hutcheson's philosophy, but its very complexity can often hide its more questionable aspects.

Chapter four examines Hutcheson's concept of benevolence. Even though it is the moral sense which perceives right and wrong, it is benevolence which motivates all morally right actions. But if benevolence is to be viewed as motivating at all, Hutcheson must first refute those who maintain that all human action is actually motivated by self-love. To consider his remarks on this topic is to consider a small part of one of the main questions debated by eighteenth century philosophers.

In chapter five, one of the most important aspects of Hutcheson's thought is considered, namely, the question of how the moral sense can influence an agent towards being more virtuous. If all virtuous actions are motivated by benevolence, and if the moral sense does not cause benevolent desires, then how can the knowledge of good and evil provided by the moral sense motivate virtuous action? Hutcheson has a most ingenious answer to this problem. It leads him into viewing the scope of all endeavours to be virtuous as being confined to an agent's own personality, (though Hutcheson himself did not realize the full implications of this until he was writing his later works).

Chapter six deals with Hutcheson's debate with the rationalists. In considering this debate, one must remember that the position which Hutcheson attributed to the early rationalists and of which he was critical, is completely different from the position which Price held and from which Price criticized Hutcheson.

The last chapter deals briefly with the development of Hutcheson's thought. It is there suggested that the substantial changes Hutcheson made to his theory by the time he came to write his later works, are the result of his realizing the implications of several aspects of his earlier thought.

I think that there are primarily two things to be gained from this detailed examination of Hutcheson's works. Firstly, the attempt at a systematic presentation of a theory can itself sometimes make apparent the most important problems with that theory. In Hutcheson's case, for example, any attempt to explain the moral sense will encounter the question of whether his theory is a form of intuitionism, or some sort of emotivism. But it is precisely the compatibility of these two aspects of the moral sense which is one of the most important problems with his theory. This problem must become apparent during any thorough presentation of the moral sense theory.

The second thing to be gained by a careful examination of Hutcheson's philosophy, is a greater understanding of British, and indeed European thought of the eighteenth century. Hutcheson was in the middle of most of the major debates which the moral philosophers of the eighteenth century thought important. He took issue with the psychological egoists over the question of what motivated human actions, he debated the role of reason with the rationalists, and he laid the foundations of the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment with his moral sense theory. Understanding British moral philosophy of the eighteenth century is still important today for it is not at all clear that Anglo-American thought in this field has made much progress since then.

## 1. Introduction

### i. Hutcheson's Philosophical Writings

Hutcheson expounds his philosophy in four books and in a published correspondence with Gilbert Burnet. His first book, published in Dublin in 1725, is entitled An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises. The first treatise is entitled "Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design",<sup>1</sup> and is a discussion of aesthetics; as such it mostly falls outside the scope of this thesis. The second treatise is entitled "Concerning Moral Good and Evil"; this treatise I will be dealing with and will refer to simply as the 'Inquiry'. The subtitle to the first edition of this work makes it explicit that Hutcheson's purpose is to defend "the principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury... against the Fable of the Bees."<sup>2</sup> There can be no question of the extensive influence of Shaftesbury on Hutcheson's early aesthetic and moral theories, but the imprecision and vagueness of most of Shaftesbury's ideas make tracing this influence inexact and difficult. Locke must also be mentioned as an important influence on Hutcheson; the nature of this influence is discussed in the next section below. The subtitle also mentions that Mandeville is criticized in the 'Inquiry', and throughout all of his works, it is clear that Hutcheson is criticizing Hobbes as well as Mandeville. Hutcheson objected strenuously to the claims that the actions of mankind are never influenced by benevolent feelings, and that morality derives from enlightened self-interest. Four editions

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1. In this thesis, referred to as the '1st Inquiry'.

2. Quoted in Jensen, p. 3.

of the 'Inquiry' were published in Hutcheson's lifetime; for the last of these he made extensive revisions to the text. Since this fourth edition dates from 1738, these revisions date from the same period as the writing of the 'System', and are of interest when considering the development of Hutcheson's philosophy.

In the same year as he published the 'Inquiry', 1725, Hutcheson also became involved in a public correspondence with Gilbert Burnet. This correspondence deals with issues raised in the 'Inquiry', and in turn leads into the discussion in Hutcheson's next work.<sup>3</sup>

Hutcheson's second book, published in 1728, contained two more treatises. The first, An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, is intended to supplement the brief discussion of human nature found in the 'Inquiry'; henceforth, this part of the book will be referred to as the 'Essay'. The second part of this book, entitled Illustrations on the Moral Sense and henceforth referred to as the 'Illustrations', was provoked by the correspondence with Burnet, and is primarily a clarification of Hutcheson's position vis-a-vis the moral rationalist school. It is very important to notice that Bishop Butler's Fifteen Sermons had been published two years before in 1726. By the time he wrote his second book, Hutcheson had been deeply influenced by Butler, and made substantial changes in his theory in the light of this influence. However, the significance of these changes must not be over-estimated, for they are primarily in the form of additions to, rather than denials of, the earlier theory. Because of this, I have usually thought it permissible to present Hutcheson's theory as stated in his first two books as one theory, and

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3. Published in Peach, p. 195-247. Henceforth referred to as the 'Correspondence'.



to postpone the discussion of the development of his thought until afterwards.

While a professor at the University in Glasgow, Hutcheson published in Latin a student handbook on ethics, politics, natural law and economics. This was translated into English and published in 1746 as A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy in Three Books. This work is of less interest than the rest of Hutcheson's writings, perhaps because of the audience it was written for; it is dedicated "To the Students in Universities".<sup>4</sup> I will have occasion to refer to it, but there is little in its discussion of ethics which is not found elsewhere in Hutcheson's works. This work will be referred to as the 'Introduction'.

Written before the 'Introduction',<sup>5</sup> but not published until 1755, was the System of Moral Philosophy, hereafter referred to as the 'System'. This work is much more disjointed than his earlier works, as Hutcheson himself admits. In a letter of 1741 he says of the 'System': "...as to composing in order, I am quite bewildered, and am adding confusedly to a confused book all valuable remarks in a farrago, to refresh my memory in my class lectures on several subjects."<sup>6</sup> The changes in his philosophy between the 'Essay' and the 'System' do not amount to a major revision, except perhaps on one point, but rather to a series of corrections and afterthoughts superimposed on the earlier theory. I will remark on these changes in Chapter 7.

4. In eighteenth century Scotland, the age of university students would correspond more closely with that of present day secondary school students than with university students. Thus Hume attended Edinburgh University from the ages of eleven to fourteen, (cf. Mossner, p.40-41), although Hutcheson did not start at Glasgow until he was seventeen: (cf. Scott, p.10).

5. Cf. Scott, p.244-246.

6. Quoted in Scott, p.114.

## ii. Locke's Influence

Hutcheson was greatly influenced by Locke; he accepted from Locke in its entirety the theory of ideas and the accompanying empiricist epistemology. That is to say, Hutcheson believed throughout his life (he never changed his mind on these points), that the mind is conscious of nothing save ideas; that all ideas are either simple or compound;<sup>7</sup> that the latter are compounds of the former;<sup>8</sup> that there are no innate ideas;<sup>9</sup> and that all ideas in the mind are first received by the senses.<sup>10</sup> These are unargued premises for Hutcheson; he simply accepts them as obvious. And he repeatedly uses them in his arguments, especially in his arguments against the rationalists. If these premises be considered false, then, although Hutcheson's theory may still be true, many of his supporting arguments are undermined. Also borrowed from Locke is the distinction between the external senses and reflection, and the primary-secondary quality distinction.<sup>11</sup> But one cannot be too careful in determining the exact nature of this influence; it is not at all clear, for example, whether reflection and the internal senses are the same thing;<sup>12</sup> nor whether Hutcheson's discussion of concomitant ideas is not something different from Locke's notion of primary qualities.<sup>13</sup>

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7. Essay, p.2-3; 1st Inquiry, p.2-3.

8. Ibid.

9. Essay, p.3. Introduction, p.7.

10. Essay, p.3.

11. 1st Inquiry, p.5.

12. Below, chapter 2, sec.i.

13. Below, chapter 3, sec.ii.

To say that Hutcheson has chosen to imbed his moral theory in an empiricist framework is not, of course, to say that there is nothing of interest in Hutcheson's philosophy which can be judged separately from this background. His analysis of desires, his refutation of Hobbes, and much of his understanding of the relation between human nature and morality, for example, are independent of the theory of ideas, although Hutcheson often presents them in the terms of that theory.

## 2. Theory of Human Nature

### i. Sensation

For Hutcheson, the nature of morality is primarily determined by the structure of human nature; thus his analysis of human nature is central to his moral philosophy. He discusses human nature in terms of four basic categories; the senses, the affections, reason, and pleasure and pain. These I will consider in turn.

Like his theory of ideas, Hutcheson borrowed his theory of the senses from Locke; the two theories are, of course, closely connected. Locke distinguished between the external senses and reflection, the former giving us ideas about the material world, the latter ideas about the processes of our own minds. Hutcheson draws a similar distinction between the external and internal senses, but he discusses the internal senses at much greater lengths than Locke discusses reflection.<sup>1</sup> The external senses are the normal five senses of hearing, seeing, etc. The internal senses are the origins of our ideas of our own minds, such as our sense of pleasure and pain, and are the origin of ideas which tend to accompany our other ideas, such as our sense of beauty, our moral sense, our sense of dignity, etc.<sup>2</sup> An early formulation of the external - internal distinction emphasizes that the internal senses as the source of new ideas and impressions, and the internal senses as the source of awareness of our feelings (i.e.

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1. The internal senses have two aspects. In this section I discuss primarily the analogy between external and internal senses. The next section deals with the internal senses as sources of pleasure and pain.
  2. One commentator remarks that Hutcheson discovered new senses at the rate of one every four years. cf. Jensen, p. 40.

pleasure and pain), are equated by Hutcheson. Note the use of the phrases 'pleasure of beauty and harmony' and 'perception of beauty and harmony' in this quotation:

"Since then there are such different powers of perception, where what are commonly called the external senses are the same; since the most accurate knowledge of what the external senses discover, may often not give the pleasure of beauty or harmony, which yet one of good taste will enjoy at once without much knowledge; we may justly use another name for these higher and more delightful perceptions of beauty and harmony, and call the power of receiving such impressions, an internal sense:..." (1st Inquiry, p. 10-11)

This equation of feeling pleasure and perceiving new ideas indicates that Hutcheson changes fundamentally the nature of Locke's reflective senses, so much so that 'reflection' is no longer an adequate term for them. Internal sensations have an emotive role which enables Hutcheson to add a sense of beauty, the moral sense, etc., to Locke's reflective perceptions of the workings of our minds. I will discuss in the next section the details of this emotive role of the internal senses, where I think it will become obvious that Hutcheson's new senses are more than reflective senses giving information about the processes of our own mind. But however much he expands the role of the internal senses, there remain two aspects of his discussion which indicate the origin of the conception in Lockian reflection; firstly, Hutcheson always retains the Lockian notion that we have ideas obtained by reflection of the workings of our own minds; and secondly, even if some of the internal senses seem to give us knowledge about more than our own minds, all internal senses are known themselves by reflection. That is, for example, although the moral sense may give us ideas of something other than the workings of our mind, all our

knowledge of our moral approval is by reflection.<sup>3</sup>

The length and complexity of Hutcheson's discussion of the various senses make it easy to lose track of just what a sense is, and hence of what Hutcheson is claiming when he attributes the origin of some idea to a particular sense. At one point he defines a sense as "a determination of the mind to receive any idea from the presence of an object which occurs to us, independent on our will." (Inquiry, p. 113). The phrase 'independent on our will' is important, for it indicates one of the factors common to all sense perception; to wit, that we are necessarily determined to perceive the ideas which we do. This is to say that a sensed idea immediately and independently of our volition arises in the mind in certain situations; in the case of the external senses, certain physical conditions necessarily result in our sensing ideas; in the case of the internal senses, the presence of one idea necessarily gives rise to some other idea. Hutcheson seems to think that this distinguishes the senses from reason and from passions and desires, (cf. 1st Inquiry, p. 11), but as Raphael points out,<sup>4</sup> we are as determined in our rational belief as we are in our sense perceptions. Hutcheson explicitly admits the necessity of rational beliefs, (and for him such beliefs are perceived by reason): "this may let us see that relations are not real qualities inherent in external natures but only ideas necessarily accompanying our perception of two objects at once and comparing them." (Illustrations, p. 142). If the mind necessarily perceives relations, then independence from our will cannot be used as a criterion for distinguishing sense from reason. Hutcheson could reply to this,

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3. Cf. below, chapter 3, sec. ii.

4. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 19.

though he does not do so. Since for Hutcheson reason is the perception of the relation between two ideas, he could maintain that although when presented with two ideas we are determined to see a certain relation, the mind must be active in so far as it must compare the two ideas before the relation can arise. But this is still not sufficient to distinguish reason from perception for Hutcheson, for just as one can exercise the will and not compare two ideas, one can exercise the will in the case of the internal senses by refusing to consider an idea which would give rise to an idea of that internal sense. This last point would not apply to the case of the internal senses reacting to an object actually present to the external senses, (which is the case Hutcheson seems to have in mind when he originally presents the criterion in the first Inquiry, p. 11), but it is applicable to those cases in which the internal senses react to an imagined object. The criterion must be applicable to all cases, including cases of imagining, if it is to be sufficient.

The criterion is no more successful when used to distinguish perceptions from desires, for desires are also necessary in the sense that perceptions are. As I will discuss below, desires arise as the necessary result of having certain types of beliefs.<sup>5</sup> Thus it would seem difficult to use independence of our will as a criterion for distinguishing sense perception from the other activities of the mind.

The only other factor which for Hutcheson is common to all the senses is that they all provide us with new, simple, unanalysable ideas. Thus when he claims that a group of ideas derive from a sense, he is claiming two things; firstly, that some of the ideas are simple and unanalysable; and secondly, that some of the ideas necessarily

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5. Cf. below, chapter 2, sec. ii-d.

arise as they do. It is often useful to apply these two criteria to the relevant ideas whenever Hutcheson introduces a new sense. In particular, the former must be remembered with respect to the moral sense, for the fact that a sense must give us new simple ideas can often be lost in viewing the moral sense as a form of feeling or emotion.

The other point that it is easy to lose sight of through Hutcheson's proliferation of senses, is the fundamental reason why Hutcheson thinks he requires all of them. His reasoning is this: given that we have moral, aesthetic and other similar ideas, and given Locke's theory of the origins of our ideas in the senses, then there must be senses which give us those ideas. If they are not compounds of ideas from the external senses, which does not look promising, and are not relations, which Hutcheson explicitly rejects, then there must be special senses which provide us with them. Thus this wide use of the term 'sense' is simply the direct result of trying to account for the origins of aesthetic and moral ideas and at the same time maintain that all our ideas originate in the senses. For example, Hutcheson argues "that this perception of moral good is not deriv'd from custom, education, example, or study. These give us no new ideas:..." (Inquiry, p. 128). And one might draw attention to the title of the treatise in which the internal senses are first explained: "An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue".



## ii. The Affections

### a. The Internal Sensations

The second aspect of human nature that must be considered is that which Hutcheson calls the affections. The eighteenth century was an era when British philosophers, especially those who were Scottish, prided themselves on their ability to write on philosophical topics in fluent, everyday English. It was not an era when philosophers consciously created technical languages and prided themselves on the consistent use of technical words. Hutcheson is by no means always consistent in his use of the word 'affection', nor of the other central words in the following discussion. But in spite of this, I shall use the words 'affections', 'passions', 'desires', etc. as technical terms. I will define them as clearly as possible from the passages in which Hutcheson is discussing them directly, and ignore the fact that he sometimes uses them loosely throughout the rest of his writings. All the following distinctions Hutcheson makes at some point or other, but his use of key terms is not always consistent with them when he is discussing other topics.

The term 'affection' includes three things for Hutcheson: passions, desires, and certain internal sensations which today would probably be called feelings or emotions. (Only some of the internal sensations are classed by Hutcheson as affections, but I think that distinction unimportant, as I explain below.) Of these, the internal sensations are categorially different from the other two: passions and desires motivate actions; sensations, including internal sensations, do not. (It should be noted, therefore, that Hutcheson uses the word 'passion' for a type of motivational impulse, which he distinguishes from

desires, and not for the emotions in general as one might expect. However, he often uses the word 'passionate' to denote the fact that a motivational impulse is accompanied by sensations or emotions.<sup>6)</sup> This use of the word 'affection' to include two quite different things, (i.e. emotions and motivational impulses), is confusing, but it was common in the eighteenth century not to distinguish these, and Hutcheson thinks it best to conform to the common usage of his day. The distinction and his reason for retaining the word 'affection' he puts thus:

"If we could confine the word affection to these two, (i.e. desire and aversion), which are entirely distinct from all sensation, and directly incline the mind to action or volition of motion, we should have less debate about the number or division of affections. But since, by universal custom, this name is applied to other modifications of the mind, such as joy, sorrow, despair, we may consider what universal distinction can be assigned between these modifications, and the several sensations above mentioned; and we shall scarce find any other than this, that we call the direct immediate perception of pleasure or pain from the present object or event, the sensation: But we denote by the affection or passion some other perceptions of pleasure or pain, not directly raised by the presence or operation of the event or object, but by our reflection upon, or apprehension of their present or future existence; so that we expect or judge that the object or event will raise the direct sensation in us." (Essay, p. 27)

This quotation shows that Hutcheson carefully distinguished those sensations which are included under the affections, and those sensations which are not. The latter are any sensations we receive from objects which are actually present to us when we receive the sensation; the former are sensations of pleasure or pain at the thought or idea of an

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6. Cf. below, chapter 2, sec. ii-b.

object which is not just then present.<sup>7</sup> This makes it apparent that those affections which are sensations are a sub-set of internal sensations; affections are reactions to imagined or thought of objects, but internal sensations may be reactions either to imagined objects, or to objects which are actually present. Since the moral sense, for example, would appear to be able to react to both imagined actions (Hutcheson talks about our moral approval of actions in history and literature, for example), and to actions actually present, and since the moral sense must react, even in the case of actions which are currently witnessed, to a complex conception of the action and not to the action as perceived, the classification of only some internal sensations as affections is unimportant. Hence I will consistently use the term 'internal sensation' for all sensations which are reactions to other ideas, whether or not those other ideas are presently perceived by the external senses, or only thought of. The important point is that internal sensations are reactions to complex (and rational) conceptions; it is not important whether what is conceived of is actually present or only imagined.

This aspect of the internal sensations - that they are reactions to our ideas, either when perceived or when they are later thought - needs to be emphasized. Internal sensations do not arise without prior ideas in the mind; in this they differ from the external senses of hearing, seeing, etc. In fact, this is the criterion for distinguishing the external and internal senses. That some internal sensations arise

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7. It should be noted that in this quotation Hutcheson calls these sensations 'passions' as well as 'affections'; this is very confusing since he generally uses the word 'passion' to denote a form of motivational impulse which cannot possibly be a sensation. I discuss passions in this motivational sense below in the next section.

as the result of ideas already in the mind, and not as the result of external objects acting upon our organs, or the direct result of external sensations still present, is central to Hutcheson's theory of internal sensations. Since our conception of events and actions, and our beliefs about them, are established by our faculty of reason, the fact that some internal sensations are subsequent to these conceptions and beliefs implies that some internal sensations presuppose rational activity. This, of course, is not to suggest that the internal senses are rational; the sense in which they are senses and not reason was discussed in the previous section. Briefly, the internal senses are senses in that they provide new simple ideas, and in that we are determined by our nature to sense the ideas which we do in fact sense. Some of these senses are the source of sensations or feelings which are about, or which arise in reaction to, beliefs that are rationally established. Thus although internal sensations are feelings or sensations, they can involve a rational element which is carefully defined. This point is important in understanding the role of reason in morality for Hutcheson, and for understanding the source of moral error. I will return to the topic again in Chapter 3 on the moral sense.

A second point raised by the long quotation from the 'Essay' above, is that internal sensations are always pleasant or painful. Hutcheson uses the words 'pleasure' and 'pain' not just in the limited sense of physical pleasure and pain, but in the wider sense, common amongst eighteenth century philosophers, of whatever is liked or not liked about sensations. The fact that internal sensations are pleasant and painful accounts for the emotive element in Hutcheson's theory of

internal sensations, for Hutcheson views all emotions as types of pleasure and pain. That Hutcheson wishes his theory of internal sensations to be an account of human emotions is clear from his examples: joy, sorrow, (Essay, p. 28), envy, fear, hope, etc. (Essay, p. 66). As a theory of human emotions, internal sensations are perhaps open to the objection that there is more to emotions than sensations of liking and disliking. But this ignores two aspects of the theory; firstly, that a sensation is always a reaction to specific ideas; which idea an internal sensation is connected with determines which emotion the sensation is. This is the criterion behind the classification of the emotions in Section III of the 'Essay'. Secondly, the internal sensations are closely connected with desires and passions. It is in fact the desire and passion plus the accompanying internal sensation which are referred to as one emotion. The sorrow of hatred, for example, involves not only the sensation of unpleasantness at the thought of the success of someone not liked, it also involves the desire to hinder his success (Essay, p. 77). Hutcheson's theory that emotions are only sensations of pleasure or pain is not as simple or inadequate as might at first appear. It must be remembered that these feelings are inexorably confused with each other, with the thoughts and ideas which trigger them, and with desires and passionate impulses. These taken together are probably a more adequate description of human emotions than the internal sensations by themselves. Whether internal sensations plus passions and desires are adequate for an analysis of human emotions is an interesting question (to which I think the answer is that they are not), but the question falls outside the scope of this thesis.

I will not be dealing with Hutcheson's theory of the emotions except as it relates to the theory of the moral sense.

One of the fundamental problems of Hutcheson's theory of the internal senses, is brought out by comparing what was said in the previous section about the internal senses as the source of new ideas, with the point now raised of their relation to pleasure and pain. If the internal senses are only sensations of pleasure and pain, then how are they the source of new simple ideas as I described previously? If they are not the source of new simple ideas, then why are they called 'senses'? And why are they postulated at all? If the internal senses are all only sensations of pleasure and pain, then, since more than one sense can react to a given object or event, how do we tell the sensations apart? How Hutcheson came to view emotions as internal sensations is partly explained by the fact that for him perceiving by the senses and feeling pleasure are the same sort of thing. This situation is exceedingly confusing, for it leaves one wondering whether the moral sense is a faculty which intuits moral ideas, or whether it is a faculty which feels moral emotions. It is both, a fact that causes problems which are discussed in Chapter 3 below. Part of the reason that Hutcheson held these two views of the nature of the moral sense is to be found in the development of his thought. When he first used the moral sense to refute Hobbes and the egoists, he tended to emphasize the emotional aspect of the moral sense. When he later came to argue against the rationalists, he tended to emphasize the intuitive aspect of the moral sense. However, as can be seen from the long quotation earlier in this section, Hutcheson held both of these views of the moral sense

simultaneously, even if he tended to accent one aspect or the other as suited his purposes at the time. The development of Hutcheson's thought is discussed in more detail below in Chapter 7.

The fact that the theory of internal sensations is partly a theory about human emotions or feelings, and partly a theory of the sources of some of our ideas, should be seen in the context of the analogy between the external and internal senses. Hutcheson seems to be saying that emotions and sense perceptions are the same sort of thing; and he seems to suggest that the only difference between them is that we see, for example, as a result of being confronted with an external world, whereas we have emotions as the result of being confronted with beliefs and ideas. The equation of perception and feeling is fairly explicit in the following sort of passage, which is by no means rare in Hutcheson's writings:

"All our ideas,... are received by some immediate powers of perception internal or external which we may call sense; by these too we have pleasure and pain. All perception is by the soul, not by the body, though some impressions on the bodily organs are the occasion of some of them; and in others the soul is determined to other sorts of feelings or sensations where no bodily impression is the immediate occasion. ...a temper observed, a character, an affection, a state of a sensitive being, known or understood, may raise liking, approbation, sympathy, as naturally from the very constitution of the soul, as any bodily impression raises external sensations." (Illustrations, p. 135)

This passage makes it clear that Hutcheson views feelings as the same sort of thing as the perceptions of the external senses, and that the only difference between them is that the latter are the result of "impressions on the bodily organs" and the former arise as the result of situations which are "known or understood". Internal

sensations for Hutcheson are both emotions and the source of new intuited ideas; this ambiguity remains throughout Hutcheson's writings.

#### b. The Passions

Hutcheson's use of the word 'passion' is exceedingly confusing. This is basically because he uses it for three separate things. Firstly, he uses it for the internal sensations as I have described them above. Secondly, he uses it for any desire which is accompanied by internal sensations; these I will call 'violent desires', but Hutcheson often calls them 'passionate desires'.<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, he uses it for violent impulses which motivate and are accompanied by internal sensations, but are not violent desires. It is this last usage which I will adopt. But one should not be misled in reading the 'Essay', for it is mostly the second meaning which Hutcheson uses, except where he is explicitly discussing passions in the third sense.<sup>9</sup> The motivational aspects of passions in the third sense are also sometimes referred to as 'appetites' or 'instincts'.<sup>10</sup>

What these three uses of the word 'passion' have in common is the presence of internal sensations; in the first case by themselves,

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8. Throughout the rest of this thesis I will use the word 'violent' to indicate that a passion or desire is accompanied by internal sensations regardless of the magnitude of those sensations. I choose not to use the word 'passionate', which Hutcheson often uses, to avoid confusion with passions as motivational impulses. The word 'emotional' would often be appropriate, but it does not have the merits of obviously being a technical expression, or of being used by Hutcheson. Hutcheson uses the word 'violent' in, for example, *Inquiry*, p. 223, or p. 292 where "more violent or passionate" in the fourth edition replaces "stronger" in the second.

9. Cf. *Essay*, p. 28-29, 61, 63-65, 91-93, 106.

10. *Essay*, p. 91-93, 106.



in the second case accompanying desires, and in the third case as an integral part of passions or appetites. Hutcheson tends to call 'passionate' any aspect of human nature which has strong sensations accompanying it, (hence, for example, passionate desires), but I think it more convenient to restrict the use of the word 'passion' to instincts or appetites. This usage may serve to make at least one point, that all instincts are for Hutcheson accompanied by strong sensations, i.e. are passionate.

Hutcheson distinguishes passions<sup>11</sup> from desires. Passions must be violent and particular. To say that they are necessarily violent, though they may vary in degree of violence, is to say that they are always accompanied by internal sensations or feelings. Passions, like desires, can motivate actions; Hutcheson variously refers to this aspect of them as a "strong brutal impulse of the will" (Essay, p. 28), as a "propensity of instinct to objects and actions" (Essay, p. 63), or as an "instinct" or "appetite" (Essay, p. 91-93). Desires may be general in that a given desire may be a desire for the means to the satisfaction of several other desires. Thus having money is usually desired as a means to fulfilling a number of other desires. The passions can never be general in this sense; they are always particular and motivate us to action merely to satisfy the given passion. This relation between passions and motivation presupposes that the passions are directional; that is, that they motivate us towards particular types of behaviour. The passion of hunger, for example, drives us to seek and eat food; the passion of thirst drives

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11. Here and henceforth, 'passion' is used in the third sense, i.e. to refer to a violent instinct or appetite.

us to drink, etc. The fact that internal sensations always accompany the passions, (or are part of them, it is not clear which), is connected to the question of how the passions motivate. These internal sensations must be either pleasant or painful; those that accompany the passions are almost always the latter. The passions motivate by exciting us to remove this unpleasantness. It is difficult to see how a pleasant passion could motivate, except by exciting us to continue the pleasantness, but Hutcheson does not mention this. This structure, by which the pleasure or pain of the accompanying sensations is the motivating force in the case of the passions, is different from the motivating structure of desires. In the case of desires, the accompanying sensations are unnecessary, and indeed may not even be present.

#### c. Desires

Hutcheson sometimes equates affections with desires, and at one point says that desires are the only pure affections, (Essay, p. 60). But in many places he uses the word 'affection' as I have been using it, to include passions and some of the internal sensations as well as desires. Despite this confusion in terminology, there is a clear distinction between passions and desires for Hutcheson. Unlike the passions, desires are always quite distinct from any sensations which may or may not accompany them. Like the passions, however, desires motivate actions, and furthermore, they motivate because of their relationship to pleasure and pain. But in the case of desires, the pleasure or pain need not be present with the desire and usually is not: rather, knowledge of the pleasure or pain which will result upon the action is present, and is the cause of the desire. This is clear

from the passage in the 'Essay', for example, in which Hutcheson says that desire (and aversion) "seem to arise necessarily from a rational apprehension of (natural) good or evil,..." (Essay, p. 63). The belief about possible pleasure or pain which causes a desire need not be about the pleasure or pain of the person who has the desire; it could be about someone else's pleasure or pain: "The apprehension of (natural) good, either to ourselves or others, as attainable, raises desire:..." (Essay, p. 62). In the case of desires, it is beliefs about, or apprehension of, possible pleasures and pains, not the pleasures and pains themselves, that lead us on to action, to acquire or avoid an object or event as one could say that the passions motivate by unpleasantness pushing us towards certain actions, while desires draw us on by beliefs about anticipated pleasure, or possible pain to be avoided. Since for Hutcheson there is no innate knowledge of what will give us pleasure or pain, a desire necessarily presupposes that we have experienced a similar pleasure or pain before. With the passions there is no such presupposition, nor any belief about what will give us pleasure or pain. Thus there is a difference in type between passions and desires for Hutcheson.

Ryle is mistaken when he claims that for Hutcheson passions and desires differ only in degree.<sup>12</sup> For Hutcheson, desires presuppose beliefs about natural good and evil (i.e. pleasures and pains), passions do not. They also differ in that internal sensations are a necessary part of passions, whereas a desire is always distinct from accompanying sensations if there are any. In the following passage in the 'System', Hutcheson explains the difference between a desire,

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12. Ryle, p. 94.

any sensations which may accompany the desire, and the belief about possible good and evil which causes the desire, (the last of these is here called the 'motive' for the desire):

"But the several selfish desires, terminating on particular objects, are generally attended with some uneasy turbulent sensations in very different degrees: yet these sensations are different from the act of the will (i.e., the desire) to which they are conjoined; and different too from the motives of desire. The motive is some good apprehended in an object or event, toward which good the desire tends;..." System, p. 41.

Besides distinguishing desires from any accompanying pleasures and pains, Hutcheson also distinguishes the object of a desire from any pleasure or pain which may result from the satisfaction of the desire, (System, p. 41-42). The object of a desire is the event or state of affairs that the desire motivates us towards; it is not the pleasure or pain that we believe will result, even though the belief about the pleasure or pain is necessarily present and is what gives rise to the desire. In this context, Jensen finds it helpful to introduce G.E. Moore's suggestion that there are two senses of the phrase that all desires exist "because of" some pleasure.<sup>13</sup> A desire can be said to be because of some pleasure either if it is caused by that pleasure, or if that pleasure is the object of the desire. But this comparison with Moore is very misleading, for Moore and Hutcheson seem to have quite different notions of how pleasure can cause desires. For Moore, it is the actual pleasure which accompanies the thought of what is desired which he admits might be part of the cause of desires:

"Suppose, for instance, I am desiring a glass of port wine.... The idea of the drinking causes a feeling of pleasure in my mind, which helps to produce that

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13. Jensen, p. 21.

state of incipient activity, which is called 'desire'. It is, therefore, because of a pleasure, which I already have...that I desire the wine, which I have not." <sup>14</sup>

From this actual pleasure which may cause a desire, Moore distinguishes the thought of possible pleasure to come which may be the object of desire. He says, "It is in fact only where the latter, the 'thought of a pleasure', is present that pleasure can be said to be the object of desire, or the motive to action."<sup>15</sup> But this is not the distinction relevant to Hutcheson's discussion. Hutcheson distinguishes any pleasure which may accompany a desire from that desire, (Essay, p. 29; System, p. 41). Such pleasures, which for Moore are the cause of desires, are, on Hutcheson's theory, not always present, and are certainly not the cause of desires. What does cause desires for Hutcheson is the belief or thought about future pleasure, (Essay, p. 28, 62, 63; System, p. 41); but that is what Moore distinguishes from the cause of desires and what he says must be present if pleasure is to be the object of desires. Furthermore, for Hutcheson the cause of desires, (i.e. the belief about possible pleasures and pains), is distinguished from the object; the object is that action, event, state of affairs, or thing, (Hutcheson nowhere makes it clear which of these sorts of things is the object of desires),<sup>16</sup> which is desired. I do not think Jensen is clear on how possible pleasure, rather than actual pleasure as on Moore's theory, causes desires for Hutcheson;

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14. Moore, p. 69. Moore's emphasis.

15. Moore, p. 70. Moore's emphasis.

16. Moore also goes on to make this distinction between the thing desired (e.g. the glass of port) and the pleasure one thinks will accompany having that thing.

Jensen says, for example: "he (Hutcheson) returns constantly to a position, in agreement with Moore, that pleasure is not the object of desire, but is somehow the cause of it."<sup>17</sup>

I think that there can be little question that for Hutcheson the belief about possible pleasure or pain (our own or someone else's) actually causes the desire. This is in agreement with Kemp Smith's interpretation, for he says that "pleasure and pain, for Hume as for Hutcheson, are merely the efficient causes, not the objects or ends of action."<sup>18</sup> Jensen, though is slightly hesitant for he "wonders nervously whether Hutcheson does not slip backwards at times into (psychological) hedonism,"<sup>19</sup> (i.e. the belief that pleasure is the object of all desires). And in one sense Hutcheson is a psychological hedonist: he is a psychological hedonist in that he believes that for every desire there must be an anticipation of pleasure, (it would seem that this is Moore's notion of psychological hedonism). But he is not a psychological hedonist if that requires the belief that the objects of all desires is the pleasure anticipated. If one makes allowances for Hutcheson's disposition for using his terminology

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17. Jensen, p. 21. My emphasis.

18. Kemp Smith, p. 164.

19. Jensen, p. 20. If one accepts Moore's distinction between ethical hedonism (i.e. the belief that only pleasure is of value) and psychological hedonism (i.e. the belief that pleasure is the motive for all human action), then presumably Jensen means psychological hedonism. This is clear from the next sentence of his text: "Does he (Hutcheson) not write at times as if he held that many of our desires are for pleasure?" Not so clear is whether or not Jensen is accusing Hutcheson of egoistical psychological hedonism. If he is, then he would be missing the point to Hutcheson's refutation of Hobbes, (see below, this section). Jensen himself has just finished discussing Hutcheson's refutation of the egoists, (p. 13-19), but he does not seem to consider this point when discussing whether Hutcheson slips back into hedonism, p. 20-23).

loosely, I do not think there are many passages where he is confused over the objects of desires and the anticipated pleasures of their satisfaction. The matter is confusing because it is the beliefs about the possible pleasures of the object which causes desires, but these pleasures are not the objects of the desires.

Perhaps it would be helpful to include here a list of all the different things which Hutcheson has distinguished:<sup>20</sup>

desires

pleasures or pains accompanying the desire

beliefs about possible pleasures or pains (these cause

the desire; Hutcheson calls them the 'motive' of the

desire in the 'System')

the pleasure of satisfying the desire (which is different

from the pleasures of having the thing desired)

the objects of desires.

This question of psychological hedonism, that is, of whether pleasure is the object as opposed to the cause of desires, is important for it is closely connected with one of the central tenets of Hutcheson's philosophy. Hutcheson spent a great deal of his time arguing against the claim made by Hobbes and others that all desires are desires for our own pleasures. One of the arguments he uses against Hobbes is that the object of a desire and the pleasures of obtaining that object, are not the same thing. If Hutcheson fails to keep these two separate, then he is making the same error as his

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20. Cf. for example, *System*, p. 41-42. There Hutcheson distinguishes the belief about possible pleasure which causes the desire, (here called the 'motive': "The motive is some good apprehended in an object"), from the object, from the "feelings attending the desire itself", and from "the joy of success."

opponents. As I said, I think he does keep them separate, but that this is not always clear because he thinks that anticipation of pleasure is the motive or cause, but not the object, of desires.

Hutcheson's refutation of the egoist requires another comment in this context, for it is clear that for Hutcheson it is not just beliefs about our own pleasures and pains which cause desires. He also claims that beliefs about the possible pleasures and pains of other people can cause desires. If they did not, then we would have no concern for the good of others, a position which Hutcheson emphatically rejects. This claim that the pleasures and pains of one person can cause desires in another, is an empirical claim, and central to Hutcheson's concept of benevolence. The nature of benevolence is discussed below in Chapter 4, but throughout the rest of the discussion of this section, it must be remembered that the phrase 'beliefs about possible pleasures and pains' does not specify whose pleasures and pains are involved.

Desires may be classified into four categories according to two criteria; they are either violent or calm, and either general or particular. They may be any combination or degree of these.

To say that a desire is violent<sup>21</sup> for Hutcheson, is to say that it is accompanied by some internal sensation or feeling; the desire, however, always remains distinct from these sensations. To say that a desire is calm is to say that there are no such accompanying sensations. If there is an accompanying sensation, it may be of any degree of violence. The use of the word violent in this connexion is

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21. Hutcheson tends to use the expression 'passionate desires', but, as I have noted above, to avoid confusion with the passions, I will use 'violent desires': Cf. above, section 2-ii-b.



not to presuppose that the sensation is extreme; it may or may not be.

General desires are distinguished from particular desires by the fact that general desires presuppose other desires; particular desires do not. Thus a desire for the means to satisfy several particular desires is a general desire. If I want to be wealthy because I know it will buy me a house, a car, food, clothes, and social prestige, all of which I believe I will find pleasant, then my desire for wealth is a general desire. On the other hand, my desire for social prestige, for example, just because I think it would be pleasant, is a particular desire. A general desire need not be the desire for the means that will satisfy several wants; it may also be a desire which takes into account, weighs and considers, a number of subordinate desires all tending in the same direction. Thus the general desire of self-love is not just the desire for the means to satisfying other desires. Rather it is a general desire to maximize the satisfaction of a number of competing and often contradictory desires, some of which may have to go unsatisfied. Thus a general desire can sometimes involve the non-satisfaction of one of the very desires it presupposes. Desires may vary, of course, in their degree of generality; general self-love and general benevolence are the most general.

General desires, according to Hutcheson, arise naturally when one reflects on one's particular desires. But since not everyone is so given to reflecting, a person may have particular desires without any corresponding general desires:

"In like manner our publick desires may be distinguished into the general calm desire of the happiness of others, or aversion to

their misery upon reflection; and the particular affections or passions of love, congratulation, compassion, natural affection. These particular affections are found in many tempers, where, through want of reflection, the general calm desires are not found; nay, the former may be opposite to the latter, where they are found in the same temper." (Essay, p. 30)

Perhaps it should be noted here that the 'Inquiry' is not at all clear on the distinction between particular and general desires, but that the 'Essay' is explicit on this point, as in the above quote. This probably reflects the influence of Butler on Hutcheson's thinking, a point which is discussed below in Chapter 7.

A general desire may be either calm or violent. Hutcheson hopes that both general self-love and general benevolence will be calm, and he generally assumes that they always are. But there is nothing in his theory which entails this, and it seems to me that both general self-love and general benevolence can be, and sometimes are, accompanied by strong feelings. Some general desires are often violent; the desire for wealth is a possible example. On the other hand, even the desire for money may in some people be quite calm. Particular desires may also be either calm or violent. My desire to see a Rembrandt in the Scottish National Gallery may not be accompanied by any feelings of pleasure or pain, (that is, the desire may not be so accompanied, not the actual seeing the painting). My desire to see Paris, however, may be accompanied by quite intense feelings.

I include here a table of the various categories of the affections, and a list of the criteria for the distinctions. This is partly to serve as a summary of this section, and partly to make comparison with Hume easier.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Similar tables for Hume, slightly different from each other, can be found in Kemp Smith, p. 168, and Ardal, p. 10-11.

affections: internal sensations or feelings

: passions : always violent and particular

: desires : calm : general

: particular

: violent : general

: particular

internal sensations: feelings generally; always either pleasant or  
painful

passions: do not presuppose beliefs about natural good or evil (i.e.  
about what will be pleasant or painful)

desires: presuppose a belief about natural good or evil

calm: not accompanied by internal sensations

violent: accompanied by internal sensations

general: presuppose other desires

particular: do not presuppose other desires

#### d. Desire and Motivation

Since for Hutcheson, passions and desires motivate human actions, and are the only things which motivate human actions, some remarks on his theory of motivation are called for here.

Perhaps in the discussion so far one has noticed several striking similarities between Hutcheson's and Ryle's theories of desire.<sup>23</sup> In particular, both distinguish very carefully between desires and internal sensations. For Ryle, it is the distinction between desires and agitations (or, as he elsewhere calls them, thrills, twinges, palpitations, prickings, pangs, flutters, hankerings, cravings,

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23. Cf. Ryle, chapters III, IV and V.

itchings or commotions). But desires themselves are for Ryle and Hutcheson two vastly different things. For Ryle, desires are dispositions of a person to act in a certain fashion; which desires a person has is established by examining his actual behaviour. This examination of the agent's behaviour is open either to the agent himself or to the spectator; the agent does not have privileged access to his desires, nor is he always in a better position than a spectator when determining what his desires are. In contrast, desires for Hutcheson are not dispositions; they are mental entities or events (it is not clear which). As such, the agent has privileged access to his desires. Reflection or internal consciousness can allow a person to know his own desires in a way that a spectator can never do. A spectator can only guess from the agent's behaviour or statements about himself. This privileged access is what lies behind Hutcheson's empirical method; we need only reflect carefully to understand the nature of our desires. "In this inquiry we need little reasoning, or argument, since certainty is only attainable by distinct attention to what we are conscious happens in our own minds" (Essay, p. 1-2).

The difference between desires as events, and desires as dispositions, implies not only a difference in how we know, and who knows, about one's desires; it also implies a different relation between desires and actions. For Ryle, desires are known by knowing behaviour, and it would appear that desires are only tendencies in a person's behaviour. Thus the behaviour is prior to the desire in that the desire presupposes the behaviour. But for Hutcheson it is the other way around; desires are prior to behaviour in the sense that they cause the behaviour. All intentional human behaviour presupposes a

desire or passion as the motivating force. If an action has no intention, that is, is motivated by no desire, then for Hutcheson it is merely a random or trifling action (cf. *Illustrations*, p. 166-167). But all desires or passions do not necessarily result in action; a desire may be overruled by a stronger desire and hence not result in any action. Yet even in this case the desire is still there, and can even be known to be there by the agent's self-conscious reflections. For Hutcheson, desires exist and are known independently of the possibly resulting behaviour. For Ryle, the desire is known only through knowing the related behaviour, and does not exist independently of that behaviour. (This last point is not to suggest that for Ryle a desire results in behaviour on every possible occasion; but rather that a desire must result in behaviour on at least some occasions. It is also not to suggest that desires for Ryle cannot be known on occasions when they do not result in behaviour; for Ryle, internal thoughts and feelings are part of the "behaviour" which must be taken into account when establishing the nature of one's desires. These internal indicators could be present even if there is no visible behaviour to indicate tendencies of behaviour. However, these internal thoughts and feelings still do not constitute direct access in Hutcheson's sense.)

The notion of cause involved when Hutcheson claims that a desire causes behaviour, would appear to be some sort of Aristotelian notion of efficient cause. He uses such expressions as "exciting the agent" (*Illustrations*, p. 121), "determine any agent to pursue" (*Essay*, p. 32), "propellent motive" (*Essay*, p. 33), and many others which make it clear that desires motivate action in a causal sense. This leads Hutcheson

to a very complex theory of motivation and of the human will. And so the relationship between desires and actions must be examined carefully.

Not all desires result in action, either in a particular instance or in the long run. As I have pointed out, Hutcheson's theory still allows us to know we have a desire even if it never results in action, for desires are known by direct internal awareness and not indirectly through the actions they motivate. The reason that some desires do not result in actions (and it would seem that this is the only reason for a desire not to motivate action, if any action which tends to satisfy the desire is possible), is that they are overcome by a stronger desire or aversion: "So that it cannot be pronounced concerning any finite good, that it shall necessarily engage our pursuit; since the agent may possibly have the idea of a greater, or see this to be inconsistent with some more valuable object, or that it may bring upon him some prepollent evil." (Essay, p. 32-33; cf. also Illustrations, p. 125). Peach uses the concept of defeasibility to explicate this point with respect to benevolence.<sup>24</sup> By defeasibility he means that a desire will motivate action unless it is overcome by a competing or incompatible desire. It would seem that for Hutcheson all desires are defeasible in this sense.

Although all desires do not result in actions, the reverse of this is true for Hutcheson; that is, all non-trivial actions are the result of some desire, desires, or passion. This is to say two things; firstly, that there are no unmotivated non-trivial actions; and secondly, that nothing other than desires and passions can motivate.

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24. Peach, p. 58-74.

Hutcheson is emphatic that no other aspect of human nature except desires and passions can motivate action; neither sensations, nor beliefs, nor reasons, nor pleasure nor pain can ever cause actions without the presence of some desire or passion. Hutcheson's arguments for his claim that reasons etc. cannot motivate are discussed below.<sup>25</sup> The other point, that there are no unmotivated non-trivial actions can be discussed here. Hutcheson's most explicit discussion of this question is the passage in the 'Illustrations' (p. 166-167) where he is concerned with choosing freely. Here he argues that all motives or reasons for actions presuppose desires or passions, but then goes on to discuss "mere election". By "mere election" he means actions which have no motive and hence no desire motivating them. He seems to think that these are possible, and gives the example of someone moving "his first finger rather than the second, in giving an instance of a trifling action;" (Illustrations, p. 167). But it is clear that all such unmotivated actions imply the pursuit of no end, and in this sense are "trifling". If the action is designed to achieve an end, then the agent must desire that end, and the action is motivated by a desire. In other words, Hutcheson argues throughout this passage that although there may be unmotivated actions, they are trifling and random actions without any intention.

Perhaps this last conclusion would suggest that Hutcheson has made it true by definition that all intentional human actions are motivated by the desire for some end. But I think Hutcheson's claim is stronger than that. Desires, it must be remembered, are mental entities of some sort or other, the presence of which in a given case

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25. Cf. below, chapter 6, sec. iii.

we can establish by reflective consciousness. Thus when he claims that desires are present in all non-random actions, he is making an empirical claim about the presence of a certain sort of mental entity whenever there is a certain sort of action. Any action which is the means to an end is accompanied by, or preceded by, an example of the mental entities called desires. The empirical nature of this claim appears to be recognized by Hutcheson in passages such as the following: "Then let any man consider whether he ever acts in this manner by mere election, without any previous desire. And again, let him consult his own breast, whether such kind of action gains his approbation?" (Illustrations, p. 166-167).

But what does this claim, that all non-trifling actions are motivated by desires, involve? Perhaps the context of the claim should be spelt out further. Other passages of the book make it clear that 'desire' in this discussion of motivation should read 'passion or desire' if these two are distinguished as I have above. A passion is a strong brutal impulse towards an action, accompanied by confused sensations of pleasure or pain. A desire involves some belief or beliefs about the possible pleasures and pains which will result from the action either to the agent doing the act or to someone else. Thus the claim about the connexion between desires and motivation can be cashed out as follows: all non-trifling actions are caused either by a violent instinct involving sensations of pleasure or pain, or by a desire involving some belief about possible pleasures or pains. Thus a substantial part of the claim that all action is motivated by passions or desires is that all human motivation involves present pleasure or pain, or beliefs about future



possible pleasure or pain. As I mentioned above, this is not to say that the pleasure or pain is the object of the desire, but rather it is to say that it is presupposed by the desire. All motivation to action presupposes pleasure and pain in the same sense, since all motivation presupposes desires. But it must be remembered that, as I pointed out above, the pleasure or pain believed to be possible need not be the agent's; it could be someone else's.

Perhaps it would be best to recall here all the pleasures and pains that were distinguished from desires in the last section, for the relationship between these pleasures and pains, and motivation should now be noted. A desire is caused by, but is distinct from, a belief about some possible pleasure or pain; a desire may, or it may not, be accompanied by pleasure or pain; the satisfaction of a desire is accompanied by pleasure, and the failure to satisfy a desire by pain. These distinctions need now to be transferred to motivation. We are motivated, via desire, by a belief about pleasures or pains (ours or someone else's); we are not motivated by the pleasant or painful sensations which may accompany a desire, or by the pleasure of satisfying a desire.

Philosophers who argue like Hutcheson that all motivation is from desires, but that not all desires result in action, often fall into a circularity. They often claim that it is the strongest desires that overcome the other desire and result in action, but when asked to give a criterion for strength in desires, they offer the criterion of whether the desire results in action. Hutcheson does not fall into this trap, and it is the relationship between desires and pleasure and pain which allows him to avoid it. For Hutcheson, it is the

strongest desires that motivate, but he gives at length non-motivational criteria for strength of desires. These criteria all depend on the pleasure or pain which any event or action is likely to result in; all desires involve of necessity such a belief about pleasure or pain, and so the extent of the potential pleasure or pain can be used to order all desires according to their strengths.

The details of how to calculate the strength of desires by grief and pain, or promised joy, need not all be examined. But I will list a few to show the nature of Hutcheson's procedure. The strength of a desire "is proportioned to the imagined quantity of (natural) good, which will arise from it to the agent, or the person for whose sake it is desired" (Essay, p. 39). The quantity of good is the sum of its duration, intensity and dignity (Essay, p. 40). Any pain which will result from the action, and expense or effort of doing the action, is to be subtracted from the pleasure. The uncertainty or certainty of the pleasure and pain must be taken into account (Essay, p. 41); this in a finite being gives some preference for the near future over the distant future on the grounds that one may not live till the latter (Essay, p. 42). Finally, "Our publick desires of any events, are proportioned to the number of persons to whom the good event shall extend." (Essay, p. 42). In this last calculation one must take into account the attachments between the doer and the persons benefiting, the moral excellence and dignity of the persons benefiting, etc. Hutcheson believes that the strength of human desires, and hence their motivating force, is directly and causally dependent on our beliefs about the extent of the pleasure and pains that will result from the action.

There are a number of things that should be noted about this theory, for the theory becomes important for Hutcheson's account of the will and moral motivation. Firstly, it must be emphasized that it is our beliefs about future pleasures and pains which determine the strength of a desire, it is not the degree of the sensations of pleasures or pains which may accompany the desire. The violence of the desire is in no way related to the strength of the desire, (cf. Essay, p. 44-45). The accompanying sensations, being pleasures and pains, may give rise to another desire or passion which will sometimes motivate in the same direction as the original desire. But the new desire is different from the original desire, for it is founded on different pleasures and pains, and may even motivate a different action from the original desire.

Secondly, desires may be added and subtracted to calculate the strength of general desires which include them. The strengths of two desires towards the same object shall be combined to give the strength of the overall desire for that object; the strength of a desire which is incompatible with another desire is subtracted from that desire.

Thirdly, it follows from the fact that desires and the strengths of desires are the direct causal results of beliefs, that we cannot create or increase desires at will. We cannot raise desires by our own volition, for they follow directly from our beliefs. This is rather important for Hutcheson, for it means that the only way we can control our desires is by controlling our beliefs. This point I will return to in the next section when I discuss free-will.

Fourthly, the mathematical nature of these calculations requires

some comment. Hutcheson's presentation of this theory (Essay, p. 35-45), sounds like the definitions and theorems of an algebra textbook. Nor is this a coincidence; Hutcheson quite intended these calculations to be viewed as mathematical. But doing so presupposes that the intensity and dignity of pleasure can be quantified; this is obviously impossible, especially where two different types of pleasure are involved. Furthermore, it is to commit the error of subtracting and adding different units, for the unit of duration of pleasure cannot be the same as the unit of its intensity. However, it must be said in Hutcheson's defence that he does not seem to imagine us actually making these calculations. When we consider the various pleasures and pains, our desires react accordingly without our actually being aware of what they are reacting to. So we do not have to perform the operations. The theory is not really a theory for calculating the strength of desires, but rather a theory about what influences them. From this point of view it is possible to accept the theory without specifying how to quantify pleasures.

Finally, one should note that Hutcheson has not enlightened us on one point; How does the strength of desires for my own good compare with the strength of desires for the good of others? Such desires can seem to conflict, and Hutcheson provides no comment on which are likely to result in actions. But this is not a serious omission in Hutcheson's overall theory, for in the end he establishes (or tries to) that if our private good is properly understood, it will never conflict with the public good. He argues that our greatest and most lasting pleasures are those which result from being virtuous; that is, that the pleasures of moral self-approval and of receiving

the moral approval of others are the most intense and enduring pleasures of which we are capable. Since virtue consists in the benevolent pursuit of happiness for others, the pursuit of our own interests will always entail benevolence, and hence never be inconsistent with the pursuit of the public good. Thus he does not, at least as far as the requirements of his moral theory go, need to provide a method for making our public desires stronger than our private ones, other than the suggestion that we should carefully consider what is in our personal best interest in the long run.

Thus, in summary, Hutcheson contends that the strength of a desire is directly dependent on the amount of pleasure or pain which we believe will result to ourselves or others from the action. This relationship is a causal one, and hence beyond our direct control. We cannot raise desires at will, nor can we increase or decrease their strengths at will.

This inability to control desires directly has major implications for Hutcheson's theory of human freedom in choosing how to act. One's actions are the inevitable causal result of one's various desires and their strengths; one's desires and their strengths are the inevitable causal result of one's beliefs about pleasures and pains; therefore, given one's beliefs about pleasure and pain, one has no control over one's desires and actions. Thus the only possibility for control over one's own actions is by controlling one's beliefs about pleasure and pain. This result has significance for Hutcheson's theory of motivation, for it implies that there is no possibility of controlling our behaviour directly: one can control behaviour only indirectly by controlling beliefs. This is true of behaviour motivated by passions

as well as that motivated by desires, for passions are also determined by beliefs: "We shall generally find our passions arising suitably to apprehensions we form of others." (Inquiry, p. 174). Thus any choice we make to be virtuous or good, for example, is not a choice about how we are going to act in the world, but rather a choice about how we are going to think or believe. This may sound rather bizarre until one realizes that this claim amounts to the claim that the only way we can control our behaviour is by controlling such mental factors as beliefs, desires, and feelings, or, as one might say today, by controlling our personality and wants, or our character in general. There is possibly a substantial element of truth in this suggestion. The relation between this theory of how we choose actions and Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 below.

The way in which we can control our beliefs requires some comment. Hutcheson does not think that we can believe anything we fancy; beliefs are partly forced on us by circumstance. If something is conclusively demonstrated, then we cannot help believing it. But if the demonstration is inconclusive, then no matter how much evidence favours one side of the question, we can always at least suspend our judgement (Essay, p. 33). We have at least that much control over our beliefs. But more importantly, we have control over which evidence we consider, where we look for evidence, and whether we think about some aspects of a problem at all. Thus we can

influence our beliefs by examining those aspects of a problem which support the belief we want and ignoring the evidence against it. The best example of how this works is Hutcheson's comments on sectarianism (Essay, p. 106-110, 193-196). He suggests that the best way to overcome unwanted or evil desires which rest on sectarian passions, is to try to control the passions by encouraging beliefs which favour the other sect. Thus we are to consider and dwell on the good and amiable aspects of the sect, we are to suspend as much as possible our belief of the evil we hear of the sect, and we are to go out of our way to find out the sect's good qualities and not make similar efforts to find out their bad. This almost amounts to intentional self-deceit as a way of controlling our sectarian passions; we encourage beliefs about the other sect's good qualities so as to create desires which balance the evil we feel towards the sect, and prevent these evil feelings from motivating actions.

But more important than encouraging new beliefs is our concentration on some beliefs and expelling others from our mind. Frequent reflection on the pleasures of a virtuous life creates desires for virtue, and so such reflection is to be encouraged. We are not, of course, to encourage reflection on the effort or pain involved in being virtuous, for that would create unwanted contrary desires.

All this makes it clear that for Hutcheson a person controls his behaviour by controlling his own mind; that is, by controlling what he believes, and by controlling which pleasures and pains he reflects on.<sup>26</sup> This would seem to imply that human freedom consists in an

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26. This question of controlling beliefs and behaviour is discussed further and applied to Hutcheson's moral theory below in chapter 5.

ability to control one's behaviour by controlling one's overall personality. This is not far wrong as an interpretation of Hutcheson's thinking on free-will, but one has to examine another aspect of his theory before passing judgement. Namely, one has to consider Hutcheson's identification of the will with the calm general desires.

e. Free-will

Hutcheson was aware that his theory of desires involves, or at least appears to involve, a problem with human freedom of the will. The problem is basically this: if every human action is determined by the strongest of the desires the agent has at the time of the action, how can a person have any choice in deciding his own behaviour? How do people influence their actions by their own efforts? To some extent, this question was answered in the last section where it was established that we control our behaviour by controlling our desires, and that we control our desires by controlling our beliefs. The question I wish to deal with in this section is this: on Hutcheson's schema of motivation, how does the will function? And more importantly, how is freedom of choice in a person's actions possible?

Unfortunately, we cannot be enlightened on this problem by the manner in which Hutcheson uses the word 'will'. The reason for this is the fact that Hutcheson was not consistent in his use of the word; he quite explicitly changed the usage in each of his works. The will is not directly discussed in his first work, the 'Inquiry'. In the 'Essay', he equates the will with the calm desires. In a footnote referring to "the Schoolmen", Hutcheson discusses and appears to accept the distinction between appetitus rationalis and appetitus sensitivus, and identifies the will with the former: that is with



motivation which is founded on the calm reasoning of the understanding (Essay, p. 30-31). This passage is important for bringing out the role of reason in human will, and one cannot help thinking that Hutcheson's opinion on this subject would have been clearer if he had stuck with this use of the word 'will'. (The relation between reason and the calmness of desires will be discussed later in this section.)

However, in the 'System', Hutcheson changes his mind and equates the will not just with calm desires, but with motivational impulses of any sort: calm desires, other desires, and passions (System, p. 13). Then in the 'Introduction', he seems to forget the passions, and so equates the will with desires only, either calm or not. I do not think that this changing use of the word reflects any change in Hutcheson's opinion about the nature of human motivation, but rather that it is part of an attempt to put his views more clearly or less contentiously. This changing usage means that Hutcheson's use of the word 'will' is not helpful in analysing the problem of how human choice functions in determining human behaviour. Throughout the rest of this discussion of the free-will determinism problem in Hutcheson's theory, I will use the word 'choice' rather than 'will'.

In the previous section, it was established that we influence our own actions by controlling our desires, and that we control our desires by controlling our beliefs. In controlling one's beliefs, a person can exercise free choice in the following three ways; firstly, one can choose to reflect or not on one's beliefs and the evidence which is liable to influence them; secondly, one can choose which evidence to reflect on; and thirdly, one can, if the evidence is not conclusive, always choose to suspend judgement on a particular point.

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27. Cf. above, chapter 2, sec. ii-d, and below, chapter 5.

It follows that a person exercises choice in his actions as well as in his beliefs by these three methods.

The fact that one can only exercise free choice in one's actions by exercising free choice over one's beliefs, implies that free choice requires rationality, and this in turn implies that free choice requires motivation by calm, general desires. Beliefs are the domain of reason. Thus one can only exercise one's free choice of beliefs by exercising one's reason and reflection. This means that we can only control our behaviour by the use of reason and reflection. But reasoning and reflecting necessarily mean that our actions will be motivated by calm general desires. In his discussion of desires, Hutcheson is not as explicit as one might wish about the difference between the calmness and generalness of desires. The lack of clarity on this point probably derives from the fact that for Hutcheson, calmness and generalness tend to go together in human desires. However, it is clear from his discussion that Hutcheson wishes to claim that reason and reflection imply that the motivating desires are both calm (as opposed to passionate), and general (as opposed to particular).

If we exercise free choice in our actions, then it must be calm desires which motivate. This is because the exercise of choice requires the use of reasoning for reasons just explained, and reason is impeded by the passions. Passions are, he says

"... strong brutal impulse(s) of the will, sometimes without any distinct notions of good, publick or private, attended with a confused sensation either of pleasure or pain, occasioned or attended by some violent bodily motions, which keeps the mind much employed upon the present affair, to the exclusion of everything else, and prolongs or strengthens the affection sometimes to such a degree, as to prevent all deliberate reasoning about our conduct." (Essay, p. 28-29, also, Illustrations, p. 161, 168; Introduction, p. 98).

Furthermore, because the strength of desires depends on the natural good which we believe will result from an action, and not on the passionate sensations which accompany the desire, the passionate element of desires is of less importance when calculating our greatest good.

Reasoning and reflecting about our actions also implies that the desires which motivate our actions will be general and not particular. Since our general desires take into account the particular desires, and a general desire is by definition the maximization of the possible good, it follows that the general desires, if we calmly consider them, are always stronger than particular desires. In the case of self-interested desires, this means that we always pursue our greatest good as we conceive it, and in the case of benevolent desires, that we always pursue the greatest good of the greatest number, if we are aware of what is the greatest and the most extensive good. If we reflect, we will be so aware, and hence the general desires will always be stronger than the particular.

"... we have power to reason, reflect and compare the several goods, and to find out the proper and effectual means of obtaining the greatest for ourselves or others, so as not to be led aside by every appearance of relative or particular good." (Essay, p. 43).

From this argument it follows that any attempt to exercise free choice in our behaviour will lead to our behaviour being directed by calm general desires, and not by particular or passionate desires. This is why Hutcheson suggests that the general desires should always control the particular desires; the only way we can choose our actions is by reflecting, and that implies the strengthening of the general desires. "We obtain command over the particular passions, principally

by strengthening the general desires through frequent reflection, and making them habitual, so as to obtain strength superior to the particular passions" (Essay, p. 30). When Hutcheson discusses the hierarchy or structure of our soul as he increasingly does in his later works,<sup>28</sup> this superiority of the general over the particular desires becomes part of that structure.

It also follows from the above argument that there is a sense in which the calm general desires are rational. They are rational in that if we exercise our reason, then the calm general desires are the ones which motivate. This, of course, does not mean that reason can ever motivate without a desire being present.

"Perhaps what has brought the epithet reasonable, or flowing from reason, in opposition to what flows from instinct, affection, or passion, so much into use, is this, that it is often observed that the very best of our particular affections or desires, when they grow violent and passionate through the confused sensations and propensities which attend them, make us incapable of considering calmly the whole tendency of our actions and lead us often into what is absolutely pernicious, under some appearance of relative or particular good. This indeed may give some ground for distinguishing between passionate actions and those from calm desire or affection which employs our reason freely, but can never set rational actions in opposition to those from instinct, desire or affection." (Illustrations, p. 161; also, Essay, p. 30, footnote).

The final point which must be mentioned in this context is that the moral sense approves of the calm general desires motivating in preference to the violent and particular desires. On this point, both with respect to calmness and with respect to generality, Hutcheson is quite clear:

"Now every kind passion, which is not pernicious to others, is indeed approved as virtuous and lovely:

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28. Cf. below, chapter 7.

and yet a calm good-will toward the same persons appears more lovely. So calm good-will toward a small system is lovely and preferable to more passionate attachments; and yet a more extensive calm benevolence is still more beautiful and virtuous; and the highest perfection of virtue is an universal calm good-will toward all sensitive natures." (Inquiry, p. 183, added to 4th edition; also, System, p. 68-69, Essay, p. 32, xvi).

This section is designed to show why it is that when we exercise free choice by controlling our behaviour in the fashion outlined in the previous section, we must be motivated by calm general desires. Regardless of how Hutcheson uses the word 'will', freedom of the will implies that the calm general desires motivate in preference to the particular and passionate desires. This argument is not presented explicitly as an argument by Hutcheson, but it lies behind his identification of the calm desires with the reasonable desires, and is implicit in the identification, in the 'Essay', of the will with the calm desires. Even in the 'System', where the will is identified with the passions as well as the desires, Hutcheson claims that true freedom consists in being motivated by the calm desires. In the following passage, the reason for this is not as explicit as one would like, but I think it represents the opinion which Hutcheson always held on this point.

"When the calm principles are thus confirmed by frequent meditation, and the force of the passions abated, then it is we obtain the true liberty and self-command: the calm powers will retain and exercise that authority for which their natural dignity has fitted them, and our reason will be exercised in correcting all appearances of good and evil, and examining the true importance of the several objects of our appetites or passions" (System, p. 102).

## iii. Reason

Hutcheson very carefully limits the role of reason in human nature so as to make as apparent as possible the fallacies, as he conceives them, of the moral rationalists. To this end, he makes two central claims about reason. The first can be seen from his definition of reason in the 'Illustrations' where he says "...reason is understood to denote our power of finding out true propositions..." (Illustrations, p. 120). Combined with a Lockian theory of ideas, this definition has two corollaries, both of which Hutcheson accepts; to wit, reason is always confined to the perception of the relations of ideas already provided by the senses; and reason itself can never provide us with any new ideas. "Reason or intellect seems to raise no new species of ideas but to discover or discern the relations of those received" (Illustrations, p. 135).

Hutcheson's second central claim about reason is apparent from his earlier definition of reason in the 'Inquiry'. There he rhetorically asks "What is reason but that sagacity we have in prosecuting any end?" (Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 192).<sup>29</sup> Hutcheson is emphatic about this means-ends distinction, for it is central to his analysis of the relation between reason and motivation. As mentioned above, only desires and passions motivate or excite human actions; but one has to add that if a particular end is desired, then it is the role of reason to determine how the possible means of obtaining that end are related to the end. Thus, although reason plays a role in the resulting motive to obtain the means, this motive

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29. This was reworded in the fourth edition (Inquiry, p. 195) in an attempt to make his argument clearer, but the reference to ends remains the same.



necessarily presupposes a prior desire for the relevant end. Reason usually plays a role in human action, but this role presupposes desires. In this way, human motives are always fundamentally desires, and reason cannot by itself motivate. The point is the same as Hume's in the famous passage where he says "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions."<sup>30</sup>

In summary, reason for Hutcheson is the faculty by which we perceive the relations between ideas. This is its only role; it cannot perceive new ideas, it cannot motivate action except in conjunction with desires, and, one can add, it cannot sense pleasure or pain, nor approval or disapproval.

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30. Hume, *Treatise*, p. 415. Note that for Hume the word 'passion' has a much wider meaning than for Hutcheson, and includes what Hutcheson calls 'desires' (and also 'internal sensations'?).

### 3. The Moral Sense

#### i. Introduction

It is perhaps best to begin my interpretation of Hutcheson's moral sense theory by considering what role the moral sense is supposed to play in morality; this will serve to eliminate several extraneous issues from the discussion. Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense is intended as a theory about the nature of moral ideas, about the nature of moral approval and the justification of approval, and about the connexion of these two topics with human nature. It is not a theory about what acts or men are in fact good, nor is it a theory about which characteristics of good acts makes them good; Hutcheson's theory of benevolence is designed to answer those questions, and we will not be considering that aspect of his thought in this chapter. Nor, one must add, is the moral sense theory taken by itself designed to explain the motivation for virtue; again one has to consider the theory of benevolence to explain that issue.

The central problem of interpreting Hutcheson's moral sense theory is the problem of deciding whether he is some sort of intuitionist, or whether he is an emotivist of some variety. The parallels that he draws between the moral sense and our external senses tend to make one think that moral ideas are simple qualities which, if not actually perceived as in an action, are at least intuited as connected with the action. On the other hand, the role of pleasure and pain in his discussion of moral ideas, and the frequent references to feelings seem to indicate that the moral sense theory locates the origins of moral value in our emotions. There is also a parallel drawn between



the moral sense and our sense of beauty, but this seems more indicative of the origins of the moral sense theory in Shaftesbury's aesthetic theories, than it is enlightening about the nature of moral ideas. And indeed Hutcheson seems to use this parallel only to lend *prima facie* plausibility to the moral sense theory. This analogy with aesthetics is emphasized in the 'Inquiry', but tends to be less important as Hutcheson's philosophy develops, and hence is less often mentioned in his later works.

I will first consider the analogy between the moral sense and the external senses. In section iv I will consider the relation between the moral sense and human emotions. In order to see what sort of interpretation of the moral sense the rest of Hutcheson's philosophy favours, I will consider the relation between the moral sense and two other aspects of Hutcheson's philosophy; to wit, the justification of moral approval, and the motivation of virtuous action.

## ii. Intuitionist Aspects<sup>1</sup>

### a. The Analogy With the External Senses

If one interprets the moral sense as an internal sense, and takes seriously the analogy with the external senses, one can immediately draw several important conclusions about moral ideas from Hutcheson's theory of the nature of the senses in general. All senses are for Hutcheson the sources of new simple ideas; thus if there is a moral sense, it must provide us with simple moral ideas which are not perceived by any other sense. That some moral ideas are simple,

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1. By 'intuitionist aspects' I mean those aspects of Hutcheson's ethical theory which he arrives at by way of the analogy with sense perception.

unanalysable, and not reducible to non-moral ideas, Hutcheson appears to accept; Frankena and Peach both suggest that this is the first time in British moral philosophy that the unanalysability of moral ideas is advocated or even considered.<sup>2</sup> On the opening page of the 'Illustrations', in which work the intuitionist aspects of Hutcheson's theory are more explicit than in the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson says: "The words election and (moral) approbation seem to denote simple ideas known by consciousness which can only be explained by synonymous words or by concomitant or consequent circumstances" (Illustrations, p. 115).

As explain in chapter 2, section ii-a above, the internal senses are characterized by the perception of ideas subsequent to, or accompanying, ideas which are already in the mind. Moral ideas conform to this criterion; they are perceived only when certain other ideas are already present to the mind. Hutcheson's theory of benevolence makes it clear that the ideas which provoke the moral sense into presenting moral ideas to the mind, are ideas about human actions, the motives for human actions, and the intended consequences of human actions. It is to be noted that only of the first of these, that is of human actions themselves, might it be said in any way that they are directly perceived by our external senses. Hutcheson realizes that the other two, namely the motive for and intended consequences of human action, can only be known by rational considerations. He makes his acceptance of this clear by locating one source of moral error in our imperfect knowledge of motives and intended consequences. But the implication of this that needs to be noted at the moment is that moral ideas arise subsequent to our conception of human actions, where conception

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2. Frankena, p. 364; Peach, p. 27.

is meant to include those aspects (i.e. motive and intended consequences), which are not perceived by the external senses.

Hutcheson is explicit about the difference between the non-moral and the moral conceptions of actions:

"These three things are to be distinguished, (1) the idea of the external motion, know first by sense, and its tendency to the happiness or misery of some sensitive nature, often inferred by argument or reason, ... (2) apprehension or opinion of the affections in the agent, inferred by our reason. So far the idea of an action represents something external to the observer, really existing whether he had perceived it or not, and having a real tendency to certain ends. (3) The perception of approbation or disapprobation arising in the observer, according as the affections of the agent are apprehended kind in their just degree, or deficient, or malicious." (Illustrations, p. 164.)

The final characteristic of moral ideas which can be derived from the claim that their source is an internal sense, is the fact that the perception of moral ideas is beyond our will. That is to say, once we have a fairly clear conception of an action, we are determined by our nature to attach to that conception either the idea of moral good, or the idea of moral evil. Moral ideas arise quite unbidden, and entirely beyond our control. Whether this is an adequate account of the relation between good actions and the idea of their goodness will be discussed later.

It is important for the following discussion to mention which sort of action is in fact good, although a detailed account of this aspect of Hutcheson's views is postponed until the next chapter. Briefly, an action is morally good if it is done from, or is an indication of, benevolence, especially calm general benevolence. An action is morally evil if it is done from the intention of injuring someone, or if it is done from any sort of motive, but indicates a

lack of a suitable degree of benevolence towards others.

Given the Lockian background of Hutcheson's theory of ideas, it is important to consider whether moral ideas are to be considered analogous to ideas of primary qualities, or to ideas of secondary qualities. Hutcheson has a peculiar theory of primary qualities; he calls them concomitant ideas because he sees them as accompanying, and apparently necessarily accompanying, our ideas of certain secondary qualities, (*Illustrations*, p. 163). Thus, for example, an idea of extension necessarily accompanies our ideas of a colour; one cannot perceive unextended colour. There is, therefore, a considerable analogy between primary qualities and moral ideas; both accompany other ideas, for the idea of good necessarily accompanies the idea of a benevolent action. But is the necessity of this concomitance of a similar sort in both cases? This is a very intriguing point, and I will have occasion to return to it later. Hutcheson does not seem to consider this aspect of the possible analogy with the primary qualities. The only aspect of the analogy he considers is the fact that we use reason to correct our perceptions of primary qualities and that reason can correct the perceptions of the moral sense in a similar fashion, (*Illustrations*, p. 131, 163-164). This point applies equally well to the analogy with secondary qualities, a fact which Hutcheson is aware of, and which I will discuss below.

The possibility of an analogy with our perception of primary qualities breaks down on one essential aspect. Our ideas of primary qualities are usually considered to resemble some quality which is actually in the external object. Hutcheson accepts this, for he is a representationalist, at least with respect to primary qualities:

"Other ideas are images of something external, as duration, number extension, motion, rest." (Illustrations, p. 163). But our moral ideas are not images of any quality in the action, and so the primary qualities and goodness differ in this respect.

In view of this failure of the analogy with the primary qualities, the overall analogy between the moral sense and the external senses can only be maintained by limiting the analogy to the secondary qualities. This Hutcheson seems to do. It is generally assumed that our ideas of secondary qualities, which Hutcheson lists as colours, sounds, tastes, smells, pleasures and pains (Illustrations, p. 163), are not images of, and do not resemble, any quality which is in the external object. Similarly, there is no quality of a good action which resembles our ideas of goodness; our idea of goodness is not an image of any aspect of a good act: "This (moral) approbation cannot be supposed an image of any thing external, more than the pleasures of harmony, of taste, of smell" (Illustrations, p. 164). There is, of course, a quality in a good action by virtue of which the action is viewed as being good, namely, the degree to which the action has been motivated by benevolence. But the idea of goodness is not an image or representation of benevolence. That goodness is not an image of anything in the act, emphasizes that the goodness of an act and its benevolence are quite distinct, and that the one is not reducible to the other. In a similar way, red, for example, is not reducible to the primary qualities which cause us to see red, nor is the idea of red reducible to those qualities.

It might be objected at this point that although the ideas of good and red are similar in that both are connected with, but not

reducible to, some external quality, in the case of red there is a causal connexion between the external primary qualities and our seeing red. And it might be added, this causal connexion is partly understood. The way in which the physical structure of an object (i.e. its primary qualities), reflects light, the action of the light on the eye, and the nerves connecting the eye and the brain, etc. all serve to connect the external qualities in the object and our resulting idea of red. There is no such connexion, the objector might say, between benevolence and goodness. To this several things need to be said: firstly, just because the causal connexion is not known does not mean that there is none. Secondly, no amount of knowledge of the physical events in the chain between the object and the brain can completely clarify the connexion between physical events and the perceptions of ideas in the mind. One link in the chain between physical and mental events will always be mysterious. This, as I understand it, is the point of Hutcheson's comparing this causal chain to "the Indian's Elephant and Tortoise":

"This natural determination to approve and admire, or hate and dislike actions, is, no doubt, an occult quality. But is it any way more mysterious, that the idea of an action should raise esteem or contempt, than that the motion or tearing of flesh should give pleasure or pain; or the act of volition should move flesh and bone? In the latter case, we have got the brain, and elastic fibres, and animal spirits, and elastic fluids, like the Indian's elephant, and tortoise, to bear the burden of the difficulty: but go one step further, and you find the whole as difficult as at first..." (Inquiry, p. 272-273).

Thirdly, although Hutcheson does not make this point, it may be said that the objection misses the point of the analogy. The analogy is not intended to prove the moral sense theory: it merely is intended to show that the moral sense is plausible, and to help explain how it

works. Surely the question of the causal connexion is irrelevant to whether the moral sense theory makes sense, although, of course, the existence of such a causal connexion would be evidence for that theory.

It should be clear by now that Hutcheson's moral sense theory is not to be interpreted in a naively relativistic or representational fashion, but the alternatives to naive realism are not clear. Broad seems to think that the only alternative is some form of dispositionalism.<sup>3</sup> A dispositional theory for Broad is one which would distinguish between: a) the "peculiar sensible quality of certain sensations", and b) "the dispositional property which certain things have of giving rise to such sensations in a normal human observer..." The theory would then go on to explain what would be the criteria for a normal human observer. There is no question that Hutcheson's moral sense theory has just this structure; moral ideas correspond to a. (i.e. the particular sensible quality), and benevolence would correspond to b. (i.e. the dispositional property). Furthermore, Hutcheson does provide criteria for the normal human observer.<sup>4</sup> He obviously accepts this distinction between the goodness of an action and the qualities of the action by virtue of which it is good. And I think we can accept that this situation is parallel to that which exists in the case of secondary qualities on a Lockian theory.

But this now raises several major problems; if goodness is not a quality of the action, what is one doing when one attributes goodness to an action? One cannot be simply saying that the action is

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3. Broad, "Some Reflections on Moral Sense Theories in Ethics", p. 195-197.

4. Eg. that self-interest does not interfere, etc. cf. below, sec. iii.

benevolent, for if goodness were reducible to benevolence, there would be no need for the moral sense and moral ideas. I see this as essentially identical to the question: What is the relation between the benevolence of an action and the goodness of the action? In other words, once the idea of goodness is distinguished from the good inclining qualities of the action (i.e. benevolence), and it is admitted that benevolence and goodness are only connected by the actions of human nature, then the following questions arise:

1. Is the relation between goodness and benevolence contingent or necessary?
2. Is the origin of moral evaluation to be found in the connexion between goodness and benevolence
  - a. in the mind of the individual making the judgement at the moment of speaking?
  - b. in the disposition of the individual normally to connect goodness and benevolence?
  - c. in the mind of the individual if he proceeds in a certain fashion?
  - d. in the minds of individuals with certain qualifications?
  - or e. in the mind of most or all people?
3. What is the relation between demonstrating that an act is benevolent and justifying the belief that it is good?

The rest of this section is a discussion of the first two of these three questions; the third question will be discussed in the next section.

#### b. The Relationship Between Goodness and Benevolence

Is the relation between goodness and benevolence necessary or



contingent? There is one sense in which this relation is necessary. That is, it is necessary for us in that we are determined by our natures to perceive goodness when confronted with an act of benevolence. This aspect of the world is quite beyond our control. Hutcheson of course recognizes this, for it is one of the main points to the analogy between the internal and external senses. I will call this the natural necessity of morals.

But there is another view of this relation between goodness and benevolence, one in which the relation is contingent. Hutcheson admits that God could have created our natures differently, either without a moral sense, or with a moral sense which perceived goodness in reaction to some idea other than benevolence. We could have created, he says, so that we perceived even malevolence as the good (Illustrations, p. 133, 136, cf. also 1st Inquiry, p. 100). This is tantamount to admitting that there is no necessary connexion between the ideas of benevolence and goodness independent of the constitution of human nature. Hutcheson tries to give reasons to justify God having created us as he did, by showing that the moral sense as actually created is conducive to human happiness, but he realizes that this sort of justification of the moral sense in the end must lead back to the moral sense in a circular fashion, or else to the approval of our sense of self-interest, (Illustrations, p. 133-134, 136, Correspondence, p. 169). He thereupon suggests that God may have a faculty similar to our moral sense whereby he saw that creating us as he did was good: "Why may not the Deity have something of a superior kind, analogous to our moral sense, essential to him?" (Illustrations, p. 138, also Illustrations, p. 169). But this approach

cannot create a necessary relation between benevolence and goodness unless we can prove that this divine moral faculty is a necessary part of God's nature. This may be possible, but Hutcheson does not attempt the task. The fact that the constitution of our internal senses cannot be justified except as being in our own best interests, or by reference to our or God's moral sense, is made explicit in the first 'Inquiry' in terms of our sense of beauty:

"But then, beside this consideration of interest, there does not appear to be any necessary connection, antecedent to the constitution of the Author of nature, between regular forms, actions, theorems, and that sudden sensible pleasure excited in us upon observation of them, even when we do not reflect upon the advantage mention'd in the former proposition. And possibly, the Deity could have form'd us so as to have receiv'd no immediate pleasure from such object, or connected pleasure to those of a quite contrary nature.... This makes it probable, that the pleasure is not the necessary result of the form itself, otherwise it would equally affect all apprehensions in what species soever; but depends upon a voluntary constitution, adapted to preserve the regularity of the universe, and is probably not the effect of necessity, but choice, in the Supreme Agent, who constituted our senses."  
(1st Inquiry, p. 99-100)

From this we must conclude that the connexion between goodness and benevolence has a natural necessity, but no logical necessity; that it is contingent on human nature; and that it lacks rational justification in terms independent of itself.

Since the goodness of benevolence is contingent upon human nature, it must be discovered by experience. Without experiencing the perception of a benevolent act, and experiencing the resulting perception of goodness, there is no possibility of having the idea of goodness, or of knowing that it is connected with benevolence. Herein lies Hutcheson's empiricism, and his claim to be a pioneer in the empirical approach to ethics.

It seems that we have been led to the conclusion that moral judgements are for Hutcheson synthetic and a posteriori; that is, that moral judgements are known by experience, and that they are not necessary. Their only necessity is a physical or natural one, founded in the way God created the world. But here a complication arises, a complication which it would appear that Hutcheson was not aware of. I wish to argue that Hutcheson's theory implies a type of necessary connexion between the ideas of benevolence and goodness which never occurs between any two ideas of secondary qualities. There are no two ideas of secondary qualities which we are determined by our nature always to perceive together, but we are always determined to perceive goodness if we perceive benevolence. (The present discussion assumes that we have a proper functioning moral sense; on whether or not Hutcheson thinks all mankind is in fact equipped with a moral sense, see the next part of this section.) The contingent facts on which morality depends are not facts about the world external to us, or facts about the human actions which we morally judge, but rather are facts about the way we perceive the world. Thus the necessity is not of the trivial form: that is the way the world is, so that is the way we must see it. Rather it is of the form: we are determined to see things, (i.e. goodness and benevolence), connected, even though they are not connected in the world external to us. This implies that Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense contains a type of necessity which our external senses appear not to contain. This gives rise to a dis-analogy between the external and internal senses in that the internal senses create a necessity in the connexion between ideas which the external senses do not. To make

this clearer by example, consider a pair of typical ideas which are connected by the external senses; this table is hard and brown. It is necessary that I perceive these ideas connected in that given the table's qualities, and given how I perceive the world, I have little choice in the matter. But on the other hand, this table could become red, green, yellow, or any other colour without affecting its hardness; there is no necessity, of the sort that would make this inconceivable, involved. But in the case of moral ideas, a benevolent action is good, and one cannot change the benevolent nature of the action without changing its goodness. In the case of external objects, one can always imagine one of a pair of ideas changed without a change in the other; one can never do this with the morality of actions. Thus there is a type of necessity between benevolence and goodness which never exists between two ideas of the external senses. It would seem that Hutcheson was never explicitly aware of there being a problem in the way the ideas of goodness and benevolence are connected, for he does not discuss it directly. However, for the sake of clarifying all the implications of the moral sense theory, I think the matter requires several comments.

Firstly, it is not open to Hutcheson to solve this problem by a Kantian-style manoeuvre; he cannot claim that goodness and benevolence are necessarily connected because goodness is the form of the perception of benevolence. This possibility is consistent with most of the rest of Hutcheson's theory of moral perception, but it is not consistent with his perceptive atomism. The idea of good is a distinct simple entity, and so is the idea of benevolence. Their only connexion is that we are determined to perceive them together. Thus any Kantian-

style theory of a priority cannot be used to explain that necessity in morals which is not found in sense perception.

There is one aspect of sense perception which is possibly analogous to the necessity found in morals. Hutcheson does not discuss this possibility, and in the end he could not have accepted it, for it requires that a parallel be drawn between moral ideas and ideas of primary qualities. For reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter, (to wit, the representational nature of primary qualities), Hutcheson must reject this analogy in favour of the analogy with ideas of secondary qualities. But the possibility is perhaps of interest for its own sake. I mentioned above Hutcheson's theory of the concomitant nature of primary qualities; perceptions of the primary qualities necessarily accompany perceptions of some secondary qualities. Thus if I see something brown, I must see it as extended and shaped. The necessity here is far stronger than the connexion between accidental qualities such as brownness and hardness. It is not possible to conceive of an unextended colour, but one can easily conceive of a non-brown even colourless hardness. In the same way, if Hutcheson's moral sense theory is correct, then it is not possible for me to conceive of a genuinely benevolent action as not being good. Perhaps the notions of unextended colour and evil benevolence have the same sort of impossibility. This analogy may look enlightening, but it must be remembered that it requires moral ideas to be analogous to concomitant ideas, or ideas of primary qualities. And we have already established that this analogy breaks down because of the representational nature of the ideas of primary qualities. The moral sense is not representational.

We can now draw the following conclusions. There is no logical necessity connecting the ideas of benevolence and goodness. The only necessity in the connexion lies in the fact that we are determined by our nature to perceive them as connected. Thus their relation is contingent on human nature. Hutcheson did not seem to notice that this in fact is a stronger form of necessity than that which exists between our perceptions of secondary qualities, even though, given God's creation as it is, we are determined to see the world as we do. The only necessity amongst ideas of the external senses similar to that found in morality, is the necessity by which some concomitant ideas necessarily accompany some secondary quality ideas. But Hutcheson fails to develop his theory of concomitant ideas sufficiently to allow any conclusions to be drawn from this. And furthermore, there is a rather serious dis-analogy in the representational nature of our concomitant ideas. Mistakes in moral judgements and differences of opinion about moral matters can be attributed to human fallibility in knowing the non-moral nature of the action, and need not be inconsistent with there being a natural necessity in the connexion between the ideas of goodness and benevolence.<sup>5</sup>

#### c. Whose Moral Sense?

The second aspect of the relation between goodness and benevolence which must be discussed in this: if goodness is only contingently connected to benevolence by a faculty of the human mind; whose faculty and whose mind are we going to accept - any individual's moral sense, most or all people's moral sense, or the moral sense of individuals with certain qualifications? What happens when people disagree, or if

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5. See later in this section.

I disagree with my own judgement at different times?

To take the questions one at a time, let us consider first whose moral sense is to be accepted as the standard. In fact, this question simply does not arise for Hutcheson. He seems to think, but is not overly sure, that all humans have the same nature in this respect; the perceptions of the moral sense are always the same for everyone, and so it does not matter whose moral sense, or at what time the moral sense, is consulted. In the 'Illustrations', he considers the question "How can we be sure that we we approve, all others also approve?" (Illustrations, p. 162). His answer is that "of this we can be sure upon no scheme," and is uncertain about whether the moral sense ever varies; he suggests that "it is highly probable that the senses of all men are pretty uniform." (Illustrations, p. 162). If this is true, the question of whether the theory is individualistic or trans-subjective is never pertinent. This is why Hutcheson never seems interested in proving his points by statistics of the sort 'most men approve'.

In maintaining that for Hutcheson the moral senses of all humans react in the same way, two points must be clarified. Firstly, if everyone perceives only benevolence as good, how is Hutcheson going to account for errors in moral judgement? I discuss this matter at length later in this chapter. Briefly, Hutcheson locates moral error in our rational conception of the non-moral character of the action (i.e., whether it is benevolent or not), rather than in the moral sense wrongly perceiving the connexion between benevolence and goodness. Secondly, if everyone perceives the same connexion between benevolence and goodness, how can one explain the fact, which Hutcheson mentions

in 'Inquiry', p. 254, that some people morally value some actions more than other people value those same actions? I would suggest that this sort of difference lies in the conception of the non-moral character of the action, and hence is consistent with everyone's moral sense being the same. For example, Hutcheson suggests that "Military men may admire courage more than other virtues; persons of smaller courage, may admire sweetness of temper;..." (Inquiry, p. 254). This difference of opinion probably arises, and, if my interpretation of Hutcheson's view on moral error is correct, I think Hutcheson would view it as arising, in a difference of opinion about the non-moral implications of the qualities in question. The military man would be very aware of the beneficial affect of courage (at least to those on the same side of a conflict), while a man of "smaller courage" is more likely to be aware of the happiness caused by sweetness of temper. Different qualities of character ensure that different people consider more carefully different implications of actions. This leads to a difference of opinion about the non-moral character of actions and their implications, and this in turn leads to differences of opinion about the moral importance of actions. This is quite compatible with the claim that everyone's moral sense reacts the same if an action is conceived in the same way.

The question of whether the perceptions of the moral sense are universally similar is distinct from the question of whether having a moral sense is universal. For Hutcheson possession of the moral sense is universal, but it would appear that this is established by empirical investigation of history and cultures. He says in the 'Illustrations':



"To know whether there are not some actions or affections which obtain the approbation of any spectator or observer and others move his dislike and condemnation?' This question, as every man can answer for himself, so universal experience and history show, that in all nations it is so; and consequently the moral sense is universal." (Illustrations, p. 159)

But the next question which he raises at this point in the 'Illustrations' is of what everyone's moral sense approves; and this he seems to think can be answered by reflection on our own moral sense. Although the question of whether everyone has a moral sense is an empirical one for Hutcheson, he seems to think that the question of how the moral sense perceives can be answered by individual reflection.

The status of the claim that the moral sense does not vary, is rather puzzling; this is mainly because Hutcheson is unsure on the point. As I mentioned, he does not think that it is an empirical claim established by a survey of all people. If he thinks that the claim has some sort of inherent necessity to it, he does not explain just what it is. When confronted with a denial of the claim,<sup>6</sup> he suggests that there are probably no cases of the moral sense having varying reactions to the same object, but completely fails to explain why this is so. The vagueness of this passage seems typical: "But whether our moral sense be subject to such a disorder as to have different perceptions from the same apprehended affections in an agent, at different times, as the eye may have of the colours of an unaltered object, it is not easy to determine. Perhaps it will be hard to find any instances of such a change" (Illustrations, p. 164).

The question of the necessity of the connexion between goodness

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6. By Burnet; Correspondence, p. 203-204, 224.

and benevolence, which I discussed above, is obviously relevant here. It was concluded that the necessity is somewhat stronger than that found between any two ideas of secondary qualities, but that this necessity had its origins in the nature of the moral sense. Now the question is, can anyone have a moral sense which perceives this connexion differently? Could a moral sense ever, for example, perceive the matter wrongly and connect goodness with malevolence?

It was concluded above that the necessity which exists between the ideas of benevolence and goodness may be similar to the necessity which exists between perceiving a colour and perceiving extension. If this is so, then the possibility of the moral sense seeing malevolence as good is similar to the possibility of seeing an unextended colour. This would account for Hutcheson's uncertainty when confronted with the suggestion that the moral sense could get it wrong; for firstly, he does not seem to be clear on the sort of necessity involved in this case; and secondly, this does not actually explain why the moral sense cannot go wrong, it is merely to make plausible by analogy that it cannot. But it is not clear what sort of explanation is acceptable in either the moral sense or colour-extension case; perhaps this is why Hutcheson was unclear.

#### d. Moral Error

If the moral sense cannot vary, then it can never be in error. But if the moral sense cannot err, then Hutcheson must explain the sources of moral error in some other way. This he does at length. (It is to be remembered in the following discussion that we are considering error of moral approval, not error in moral motivation or action.) The moral sense reacts to the conception of an action; the

conception of an action consists of our perception or beliefs about the actual action, the good or evil consequences of the action, and the motives for which the agent in question did the action. If one or more of these beliefs is wrong, then we conceive of the action wrongly. In particular, the most common source of misconceptions as to the nature of actions is that people tend to take too narrow a view of the consequences of actions. When this is corrected, the moral sense gives a corrected moral judgement. For example; 'just so a compassionate temper may rashly imagine the correction of a child or the execution of a criminal to be cruel or inhuman; but by reasoning may discover the superior good arising from them in the whole; and then the same moral sense may determine the observer to approve them' (Illustrations, p. 134, cf. also, System, p. 60). It is important to note that the correction of our beliefs about the action and its consequences is the function of the faculty of reason; this is because the ascertaining of truth is always the function of reason. Hutcheson explicitly says that the natural good or evil to be expected from actions, and which actions indicate benevolence, is known by reason:

"What actions do really evidence kind affections or do really tend to the greatest public good?' About this question is all the special reasoning of those who treat of the particular laws of nature or even of civil laws. This is the largest field, and the most useful subject of reasoning, which remains upon every scheme of morals, and here we may discover as certain, invariable, or eternal truths, as any in geometry" (Illustrations, p. 159).

Since these beliefs are the domain of reason, cases in which they have to be corrected do not constitute cases in which the moral sense has reacted wrongly; rather they are cases in which the moral sense has reacted rightly to the wrong thing. Hutcheson is thus able to explain without changing his views on the constancy of the moral sense, the

following three points: Firstly, he can attribute moral error to errors of non-moral belief. He can also explain how we sometimes come to change our moral opinion of an act, for he can attribute this to changes in beliefs about the non-moral character of the act. Secondly, he can explain differences of moral opinions between different people, for again he can attribute the disagreement to a disagreement about the non-moral character of the act. This point has the implication that the correct method of trying to reach moral agreement is to try and reach agreement on the non-moral character of the act; agreement on its moral character should immediately result. Finally, Hutcheson is now in a position to locate the role of reason in ethics, and to define precisely its limit. It is the role of reason to establish exactly what the act was, what the motive for the act was, and what the act's consequences are likely to be. Once reason has established a clear conception or idea of the non-moral character of the act, the moral sense is then in a position to decide on its moral nature.

This view of moral error determines Hutcheson's account of the influence of self-interest and the passions on the moral sense. Given the idea of an action, then self-interest, the passions, sectarianism, etc. may interfere with the functioning of the moral sense. But this is not to say that the moral sense can get things wrong under these influences, but rather that these influences could prevent a clear conception of the act or prevent us from paying any heed to or even considering or noticing the moral sense. For example, self-interest may draw my attention to those aspects of the act which directly affect me and cause me to overlook other aspects of the act which may indicate benevolence to someone else. Or I may be so

engaged in the pursuit of my own interests that I may fail to note that some act is good, even if I have a fairly clear conception of the act. To correct these errors, one must consider actions carefully, and to take into account anything which might mislead, so that one has a clear and unbiased view of the act. And then one must carefully consider the results of the moral sense's perceptions; is the action good or evil?

It is important to note that self-interest, the passions, etc., cannot mislead the moral sense itself; the moral sense reacts properly to whatever the idea of the action is. Rather it is in the formation of the idea of the act, (i.e. in understanding the act), that we are misled. The moral sense is inherently objective, even if we are not. This point seems quite explicit;

"Assure us that it will be very advantageous to us, propose even a reward; our sense of the action is not alter'd. It is true, these motives may make us undertake it; but they have no more influence upon us to make us approve it, than a physician's advice has to make a nauseous potion pleasant to the taste, when we perhaps force ourselves to take it for the recovery of health." (Inquiry, p. 121)

Or later he says:

"No interest to myself, will make me approve an action as morally good, which without that interest to myself, would have appear'd morally evil;" (Inquiry, p. 123)

We may conclude that the moral sense cannot err, or be affected by the circumstances of a particular situation, but that our judgement of the non-moral characteristics of an action can be misguided. This may result in a wrong moral judgement. So it is important to make allowances for a possible misunderstanding of the action, and it is important to have some ideas as to what can mislead us in this respect.

Thus it seems that after all some people may be better placed than others to judge the goodness of a particular act. This is true, but it would seem also that all of us can judge any act correctly if we are only careful enough to understand the exact nature of the act first.

Hutcheson identifies numerous circumstances which may mislead us and must be allowed for. The most important of these are: self-interest, the passions, too narrowly confined consideration of the results of the action, imagination, education, and the association of ideas.

It may be thought that this aspect of Hutcheson's theory creates a dis-analogy with the external senses. Hutcheson is careful to point out that although the correction of moral judgements in the fashion just explained is carried out by reason, this does not imply that reason and not sense is the origin of moral ideas. He points out that we correct our external senses by reason; the standard example is of a man with jaundice who realizes that the white object is not really yellow as he sees it. But this does not make us think that the origin of colour perception is reason (Illustrations, p. 134-135). This point is uncontentious, but Hutcheson does not notice a further point. Where the dis-analogy with the sense may arise is in the nature of the perception after we have corrected the judgement. When the jaundiced man judges the white object to be white, he still sees it as yellow; the perceptions do not change when reason corrects the judgement. Thus it is easily possible for one's opinion of an object and one's perception of that object to differ. But in morality, one corrects the moral judgement by correcting the non-moral judgement of the action.

When the non-moral judgement is corrected, the moral sense corrects itself. But this implies that one cannot correct the moral judgement by reason, but still go on perceiving the uncorrected moral idea. Hutcheson does not notice that this is not analogous to the external senses.

The point of raising this apparent dis-analogy is to draw out some implications of Hutcheson's theory, which Hutcheson does not develop. Let us consider an example. Is it possible for the following situation to occur? Suppose I disapprove of corporal punishment, disapprove so strongly that I tend to be emotional on the subject. Now suppose that I witness the caning of a schoolboy, and know little of the situation which gave rise to this event. I will disapprove of the action, hence considering it evil, and I will also be very angry at the agent, (i.e. the schoolmaster). If I am told that the master is really a benevolent man, and is acting in what he sees as the boy's best interest, I may still be so angry that I find I cannot imagine that such an action could be intended as benevolent. Thus I would continue to see the action as being evil. But suppose that I know that I am so passionate on this subject that I am inclined to be misled; in this case, if enough honest men and true assure me that the schoolmaster is really benevolent, I may come to accept this, even if I cannot bring myself to conceive of the caning as a benevolent act. I may come to rationally accept that the caning was a good act, but because my image of the action as a belligerent action has not changed, (even though my rational conception has), the moral sense might still label it as evil. Thus we have a case where I rationally judge the action good, but my moral sense perceives it as evil because it is still

reacting to a biased image of the action. This rather complicated situation thus leads to results analogous to more simple ones in the case of the external senses.

Essentially, what has happened in this case is that I have accepted the moral judgement of others because I know that my passions will mislead me when making a non-moral judgement of the act. Similar examples could be thought of in which self-interest or too restricted a view of benevolence were the misleading factors. Thus it seems that Hutcheson's theory implies that one can accept the moral judgements of others if one thinks that they are less likely to be misled than oneself. The criteria for choosing such people will be derived from the factors which can mislead us. That is, one will be inclined to accept the judgement of those not involved, not passionate on the subject, and not of a sect involved. And, of course, they must have carefully considered the question. This looks like a version of the impartial spectator theory, which Hutcheson himself did not consider, but which seems at least consistent with, if not implied by, his moral sense theory.

The final conclusion to this section of the thesis is this: the moral sense is always objective and correct, but there is still room for moral error, there are still criteria for judging whether one has made a moral error or not, and there are criteria for deciding who are the best moral judges of a situation. Hence there are occasions for comparing one's moral judgements with those of others, but also occasions for rejecting a prevailing moral opinion.



### iii. Justification of Approval

Sufficient attention has been paid to the moral sense as a sense; but the moral sense also has a normative element which the external senses do not have. This normative element has three aspects; to wit, the role of the moral sense in the justification of approval and disapproval of actions, the relation between moral ideas and pleasure and pain, and the relation of the moral sense to human motivation. None of these topics is similar in the cases of the external and internal senses. I will discuss them in order in the next three sections.

Hutcheson's discussion of the justification of approval presupposes two distinctions. Firstly, moral approval is distinct from self-interested approval. Hutcheson thinks that one can approve of actions which are either in the approver's interest, or which are in the agent's interest. This sort of approval is quite distinct from moral approval, but its logical structure and the structure of its justification would seem to be the same as that of moral approval. Secondly, Hutcheson distinguishes between the exciting and the justifying reasons which could be given for any act. The exciting reason for an action is the desire or passion which causes the action; I will discuss exciting reasons later. The justifying reasons for an action are the reasons one could give in recommending approval to others. Thus the approval and motivation of actions is clearly distinguished; it is the approval of actions, and hence justifying reasons, which I will discuss here.

Central to Hutcheson's theory of the justification of approval and disapproval of actions is the distinction between means and ends.

Some states of affairs and some actions are approved of as ends in themselves; some actions are approved of as the means to obtaining some end which is approved of in itself. The justification of the approval of means is straightforward; actions can be justified by giving reasons which indicate that an approved end will, or is likely to, result. Presumably, one would take into account whether any disapproved ends would also result. This process may be repeated several times before one reaches an end approved of in itself and not as a means. Since knowledge of the likely consequences of an action is for Hutcheson the domain of the faculty of reason, it is by reasoning that we justify the approval of actions which are the means to other things; thus 'justifying reasons' is not a misnomer. This sort of justification does not directly involve the moral sense. Hutcheson views the justification of means, or, as he sometimes calls them, subordinate ends, in this fashion as being uncontentious. The important question is as to the justification of the approval of ultimate ends. Hutcheson's language on this point (Illustrations, p. 128-140), is sometimes very misleading; he says, for example, "The justifying reasons then must be about the ends themselves, especially the ultimate ends." (Illustrations, p. 129). But I do not think he means to exclude altogether the possibility of justifying the means to ends. What he is arguing against at this point is the claim that means can be justified simply by truths about their relations to ends; any action is the means to some end, and hence this relation itself cannot justify them. "Here it is plain, a truth showing an action to be fit to attain an end, does not justify it; nor do we approve a subordinate end for any truth which only shows it to be fit to promote

the ultimate end; for the worst actions may be conducive to their ends, and reasonable in that sense." (Illustrations, p. 128-129). The point he is making is that approval of means can only be justified by showing that they are means to ends which are already approved. It is essential to the justification of approval of means that the end is approved prior to the justification of approving the means. It is not merely the means - ends relationship which justifies an action, for what if it is the means to an evil end? And so justifying reasons presuppose the approval of ends, and the discussion must centre around the approving of ends.

The first and rather obvious point Hutcheson makes about justifying the approval of an end, is that one cannot justify ends in the same way that one justifies means; that would involve an infinite regression. In his discussion of fitness, which he views as a notion applicable only to the means - ends relationship, and not to ends, he puts the matter thus: "In this circle we must run until we acknowledge the first original of our moral ideas to be from a sense..." (Correspondence, p. 216). Or, making the same point with respect to exciting reasons when these are viewed as reasons for the pursuit of a means given in terms of an end, he says: "Were there exciting reasons for all ends, there could be no ultimate end, but we should desire one thing for the sake of another in an infinite series" (Correspondence, p. 227). Both the justifying and exciting reasons for ultimate ends, if there are any, must be in terms different from the reasons for means.

This potentially infinite series must end somehow if there is to be any point to the justification of means, and Hutcheson can see only one way it could possibly end, and that of course is with the moral

sense. Thus the last term of any chain of justification for moral approval will, if carried far enough, always be this: the action was intended to enhance the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers. This intention of promoting general happiness the moral sense always approves, and hence there is no need to carry the justification any further.

The chain of justification must stop with the moral sense, for as I pointed out above, there can be no rational justification of the moral sense itself. Furthermore, there is no rational justification of our approval of benevolence. Neither the existence nor the perceptions of the moral sense can be justified. Thus we have an ultimate end which is approved (i.e. benevolence), and which needs no rational justification. This establishes the possibility of justifying approval of any means to this end.

In summary, I interpret Hutcheson's theory of justifying reasons thus: to justify approval of an action, one must show that the action promotes, or was intended to promote, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. This is purely a factual consideration, and is thus the domain of reason. Approval of benevolence cannot be justified: it simply is approved by, and because of, our moral sense. General happiness is the ultimate end to which all approved acts are the means; our approval of general happiness is the end of all series of justifying reasons. The moral sense needs no justifying.

This interpretation is similar to Frankena's as he summarizes it in the passage at the end of his article.<sup>7</sup> This passage Jensen quotes

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7. Frankena, p. 374.

at length and explicitly agrees with.<sup>8</sup> But Jensen then goes on to claim that Frankena has made an error earlier in his article, and has said things which contradict his (Frankena's) final conclusion; Jensen also accuses Blackstone of the same error.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Jensen goes on to add complications to the interpretation which I have stated above, and with which he has explicitly agreed. Clearly this situation needs to be disentangled.

The error Frankena and Blackstone are accused of is this: Frankena says that moral judgements are "based on reasons";<sup>10</sup> Blackstone talks of "the ground or reason which he (Hutcheson) considers to be a justifying one for moral approval..."<sup>11</sup> and refers to "the benevolence of motives as a justifying reason for moral approval".<sup>12</sup> There is a sense in which moral judgements are based on reasons for Hutcheson, for the moral sense reacts to a conception of the action which can only be established by reasoning. But these passages from Frankena and Blackstone seem to indicate that Hutcheson is being interpreted as saying that we can somehow justify, independently of the moral sense, the approval that the moral sense gives to benevolent acts. As Jensen puts it, Blackstone and Frankena seem to think that "benevolent motives are the justifying reasons for holding that acts or persons are worthy of approval", and adds that if they do hold this view,

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8. Jensen, p. 58.

9. Jensen, p. 59.

10. Frankena, p. 373.

11. Blackstone, p. 30.

12. Blackstone, p. 31.

"then I believe that they are mistaken."<sup>13</sup> I agree with Jensen that this is an error; it is the error of thinking that the moral sense can justify our approval of benevolence, rather than thinking that the moral sense's approval of benevolence is the basis for the moral justification of actions or persons, or, as Jensen phrases it, that "the approval of the moral sense is the source of all justification."<sup>14</sup> The moral sense's approval of benevolence cannot be justified in the sense that there is no logical necessity for the moral sense to approve of benevolence rather than something else.<sup>15</sup> The moral sense simply does approve of a certain type of action; prior to its doing so there is no notion of moral approval and hence no moral goodness, and there thus can be no concepts with reference to which this approval can be justified. Justifying reasons presuppose the moral sense, for "the approval of the moral sense is the source of all justification."<sup>16</sup>

But does Hutcheson's theory imply that one is justified in approving whatever one feels approval for? Jensen thinks this unacceptable, for it would place no restraints on possible moral views. He therefore reconsiders the interpretation of Hutcheson on justifying reasons

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13. Jensen, p. 59. Jensen's emphasis.

14. Jensen, p. 59.

15. Cf. above, chapter 3, sec. ii. Although, of course, God might have good reason for his choice, such as that our present moral sense is conducive to human happiness, such a reason would not be logically compelling, for it presupposes that God desires that humans be happy.

16. Jensen is actually rather cautious in his accusation, using phrases like "seems to", and hypotheticals like "If Blackstone and Frankena do indeed mean..." (p. 59). The language of both Blackstone and Frankena is ambiguous enough to warrant this hesitation.

which he originally gave, and adds some complications. He thinks that the approval of the moral sense must be strictly limited to benevolence, and suggests that Hutcheson does so by placing "logical conditions" on what the moral sense approves. This suggestion that there are logical restrictions on the moral sense is erroneous in two respects. Firstly, the conditions are not logical; there is no logical connexion between moral approval and benevolence. The passages which Jensen cites in support of this contention do not seem to indicate any logical necessity. He attaches great importance to the 'must' in quotes like: "Every spectator or he himself upon reflection must approve..."<sup>17</sup> But this 'must' does not indicate logical necessity, it merely indicates natural necessity, as I have established above.<sup>18</sup> If the necessity is logical, then it could be known by reason, and there would be no need for the moral sense.

Secondly, Jensen's claim that there are conditions on the moral sense's approvals seem slightly inaccurate; I have already argued that there are no conditions on the moral sense, but that there are conditions on the clear conception of the action to which the moral sense responds. If the conditions are on the actual approval, then why is Hutcheson at such great pains to establish that the approvals of the moral sense are not swayed by self-interest?

Jensen concludes that "Hutcheson is maintaining that this feeling (i.e. moral approval) has certain logical conditions, namely, those requiring the standpoint of the impartial spectator."<sup>19</sup> It seems to

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17. Illustrations, p. 130 and Jensen, p. 61.

18. Cf. above: Ch. 3, sec. ii.

19. Jensen, p. 62.

me that these conditions for Hutcheson cannot be on the feeling, nor can they be logical.

But it will be remembered that Jensen introduced these logical conditions to prevent Hutcheson's theory of justification leading to the conclusion that one is justified in approving morally anything of which one approves. Is Hutcheson committed to such a view on my interpretation?

I think not. Firstly, because moral approval is different from other forms of approval, such as approval of that which I see as being in my own interests, it is only moral approval of an end which can justify moral approval of a means to that end. Secondly, the moral sense is based on reason in the sense that the moral sense reacts to a conception of an action which can only be established by reasons. And there are conditions on establishing this conception, namely, the conditions of objectivity, non-passionate involvement, non-sectarianism, etc. which I discussed earlier in this chapter. If the conception of the action does not fit these conditions, then the perceptions of the moral sense are, or may be, unreliable. Since not only is it by reason that we establish the conception of the action, but also by reason that we judge whether or not the relevant conditions are met, we are in a position to judge the reliability of the perceptions of the moral sense. This I hope I established earlier. The point which can be seen now is that this is equivalent to establishing the reliability of moral approval of ends. This, like Jensen's suggestion that there are logical conditions on what is acceptable as perceptions of the moral sense, undermines the objection that one can give a moral justification of anything which leads to ends of which one happens to



approve. And it has the textual advantage as an interpretation of Hutcheson that it does not contradict the explicit passages in which Hutcheson tries to establish that the moral sense cannot be swayed by self-interest.

Perhaps an implication of this position, which Hutcheson nowhere seems aware of in his discussion of moral justification, should be noted here. If there are conditions, albeit indirect ones, on which approvals of ends are reliable, then presumably these conditions will also apply to any means which are approved of for their relationship to those ends. This is only to say that one could question the justification of the approval of an act by questioning the adequacy of the end to which it was regarded as contributing. Thus if someone justified approving of blowing up pillar boxes by claiming that it aided the cause of an independent Scotland, one could object that if the prospect of an independent Scotland were considered objectively, and without sectarian passion, it would not be approved of. This would remove the justification for approving of the destruction of pillar boxes.

Even if it is admitted that the indirect conditions which I have proposed are as adequate as the logical conditions which Jensen proposes, it may be objected that neither is adequate to remove the possibility of justifying anything one happens to approve of. What does one say, for example, if someone claims that even viewing the matter objectively and dispassionately, he still approves of flagpole sitting as morally good? Hutcheson's reply would be that in fact, this case would never arise. The moral sense will always approve of only benevolence. This raises again the question of the relationship

between the perceptions of the moral sense and benevolence, but I think I have discussed that adequately earlier. But here it should be noted that the "weird moral views" objection<sup>20</sup> is ultimately replied to by Hutcheson by his claim that the moral sense just always does approve of benevolence and only benevolence.

One further remark on this objection must be made; namely, that in fact Hutcheson's theory of justification does not allow one to justify one's approval of benevolence anyway. It merely allows one to justify anything which enhances the greatest happiness, in terms of our approval of benevolence. Thus one could not be entitled under any interpretation of perversion of the moral sense to justify "weird moral views" in terms of one's approval of them. One can never justify one's ultimate moral approval, one can only justify other activities in terms of it. Our feeling of approval of the end is not a justification of the moral worth of that end; it is rather the perception of that moral worth. And this in turn may be used to justify a means to that end. Approval is not justification, but the source of justification.

Hutcheson's theory of justifying reasons is a theory about the justification of moral approval of some acts in terms of the moral approval of the ends to which these acts are means. The moral approval of ultimate ends is the perception of their goodness by the moral sense. This approval of ends cannot be justified. The discussion in Hutcheson is intended to prove that there can be no moral justification of means without presupposing moral approval of ends by the moral sense.

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20. The phrase "weird moral views" is borrowed by Jensen from Phillipa Foot; Foot uses the phrase to raise a similar sort of objection to Hume as that discussed here. Cf. Foot, p. 71.

Justification is a rational procedure, and is conducted by showing that an action is intended to enhance the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers. We cannot justify approving an act merely by claiming that we feel approval for it. Even our approval of benevolence is not justified in that fashion; indeed it is not justified at all.

Lastly, it only needs to be added that this role of the perceptions of the moral sense in the justification of approval, is part of what I have called the normative content of moral ideas. It seems to have no parallel in the perceptions of the external senses.

#### iv. Moral Sense and Pleasure and Pain

In discussing the role pleasure and pain play in Hutcheson's moral theory, one is essentially discussing the question of whether Hutcheson is an emotivist or intuitionist. This is because Hutcheson views emotions and feelings as types of pleasure or pain. There are two separate questions involved in deciding the emotivist-intuitionist issue. Firstly, are the reactions of the moral sense perceptions, or are they emotions or feelings? Answering that question leaves the further question: how are the reactions of the moral sense related to pleasure and pain? Are moral reactions types of pleasure (or pain), or are they only accompanied by pleasure (or pain)?

The first of these questions is impossible to answer, for Hutcheson blatantly fails to distinguish feelings and emotions from the perception of ideas: they are the same sort of thing for him.<sup>21</sup> One would normally think that having emotions or feelings is quite

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21. Cf. above, sec. 2-ii-a.

distinct from having perceptions, even if one wanted to claim that our ideas of our feelings arise in a fashion analogous to perception. For Hutcheson, this is not the case. He explicitly says that pleasure and pain are senses, and that they are analogous to our other sense faculties. "By sensation we not only receive the image or representation (i.e. idea), but some feelings of pleasure or pain; nay sometimes the sole perception is that of pleasure or pain." (Essay, p. 2). Since all emotions are types of pleasures and pains for Hutcheson, this view implies that the emotions and sense perceptions are the same sort of thing for him. This means that on Hutcheson's theory, the difference between emotivism and intuitionism cannot be very great. So in this sense at least, the question of whether Hutcheson is an emotivist or an intuitionist does not arise.

But this does not solve the problem of whether pleasure and pain accompany or inhere in moral perceptions; it merely establishes that the perceptions of the moral sense can either be forms of pleasure or not and still remain perceptions. So the question of intuitionism vs. emotivism remains in so far as we still have not established the relationship between pleasure and the idea of good. We have established that for Hutcheson the perception of ideas and the feeling of pleasure are the same sort of thing; we now have to examine whether in the case of the moral sense, the perception of pleasure and the perception of good are identical events, or only always 'concomitant'.

This question of the relationship between moral ideas and pleasure and pain is relevant to the question of whether Hutcheson is an emotivist or an intuitionist because all feeling or emotion is for

Hutcheson inherently pleasant or painful;<sup>22</sup> so if the ideas of good and evil are types of pleasure or pain, then moral ideas are merely feelings. This I would consider an emotivist interpretation of Hutcheson. It should be noted that it is consistent with at least two views of the nature of moral judgements; moral judgements could be either expressions of these feelings, or they could be statements about someone's having these feelings. I mention this to make clear that I am not using the term 'emotivist' to describe a theory of moral language or judgement, but rather a theory about moral ideas.

If Hutcheson is interpreted as saying that pleasure or pain accompanies our ideas of good or evil, then feelings are extrinsic to the perceptions of the moral sense. This I would consider to be an intuitionist's position, for moral ideas would be intuited separately from any feelings which might accompany the intuitions. Again, this interpretation is compatible with more than one theory of moral judgements or language, although it would seem probable that a philosopher who was an intuitionist in this sense would view moral judgements as judgements using the intuited moral ideas. Still, there is the question of whether judgements reflect one's own intuitions or are statements about most people's intuitions. But the question at the moment is not of the nature of moral language or judgements, but of the relationship between moral ideas and feelings. Are pleasure and pain inherent in moral ideas, or do they only accompany moral ideas?

Hutcheson's writings are ambiguous on this question. There are innumerable passages throughout his works in which moral approval appears to be a form of pleasure; for example, his most explicit

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22. Cf. above, Ch. 2, sec. ii.

definition of the internal senses seems to equate them all with feelings of pleasure or pain: the internal senses are, he says, "determinations to be pleas'd with any forms, or ideas which occur to our observation" (Inquiry, p. xiii). On the other hand, there are passages which explicitly state that the pleasures of the internal senses are distinct from, but always accompany, the perceptions of those senses. It would be difficult to get a more explicit statement than this: "The perception of the approver, tho' attended with pleasure, plainly represents something quite distinct from this pleasure; even as the perception of external forms is attended with pleasure, and yet represents something distinct from this pleasure. This may prevent cavils upon this subject." (Inquiry, p. 131. Added in 4th edition). But perhaps Hutcheson's considered opinion lies in the following passage rather than either of those just quoted:

"Approbation of our own action denotes, or is attended with, a pleasure in the contemplation of it, ..." (Illustrations, p. 116). There seems to me no point in counting the passages which favour one interpretation or the other; rather I think it more profitable to accept the text as ambiguous on the point,<sup>23</sup> and to consider instead the philosophical compatibility of each of the possible interpretations with the rest of Hutcheson's moral sense theory. Unfortunately, there are problems with the rest of Hutcheson's theory if we accept either that the perceptions of the moral sense are a form of, or contain, pleasure or pain, or that they are accompanied by pleasure or pain. Let us consider these in turn.

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23. For a more detailed discussion of Hutcheson's texts on this matter, see Norton, *passim*.

There are two ways in which pleasure could be inherent in the idea of good; to wit, pleasure could be a part of the idea of good, or the idea of good may be identical with pleasure or a type of pleasure.

The first possibility, that pleasure is a part of the idea of good, is unacceptable in the context of Hutcheson's moral theory, for it is inconsistent with the claim that moral ideas are simple. Their simplicity is destroyed if moral ideas can be analysed into pleasure and some other component, even if that other component is unanalysable. If moral ideas are not simple, then Hutcheson's reason for postulating the moral sense is undermined, for Hutcheson assumed that a sense was necessary for perceiving new simple ideas, an assumption which he never questioned. So one can conclude that the moral sense theory does not allow for the possibility that pleasure is part of the idea of good.

The other possibility, that the idea of good is identical with pleasure or a type of pleasure, has equally serious objections to it. Good cannot be equivalent to pleasure in general, for this would eliminate all moral value from the term, and be quite inconsistent with the special connexion that good has with benevolence. It would be absurd to suggest that we derived pleasure only from contemplating benevolence. This leaves the possibility that the idea of good could be a special type of pleasure. To this suggestion there is the important objection that it completely undermines the analogy with the external senses. Red is not a form of pleasure, though the perception of red may be accompanied by pleasure (e.g. the Red Flag seen by a socialist). The same point could be put otherwise; although

the perception of red may give pleasure, or be pleasant, it cannot be said that this is what is perceived. If the analogy between the external and internal senses is to be maintained, then there must be a similar distinction between good and any pleasure that is to be found in the perceptions of good acts. We may find pleasure in perceiving good, but it is the good we perceive, not the pleasure. Thus if the analogy is to be taken seriously, good and the pleasure of perceiving goodness must be two separate ideas. And hence the idea of good cannot be a type of pleasure. It should be emphasised that Hutcheson does not seem to be aware of this point, and that there are definitely passages in his writings, especially his early writings, in which the perceptions of the internal senses are viewed as types of pleasure.

And there is a further problem with moral perceptions being a type of pleasure. There is nothing in Hutcheson's writings which allows us to distinguish one internal pleasure from another except the object that provokes them. Moral good cannot be pleasure of just any type whatever; that is natural good which Hutcheson carefully distinguishes from moral good. This means that moral good must be defined thus: pleasure in reaction to our conception of benevolent actions. But this is anything but a simple idea! Furthermore, it suffers under the problem that not all pleasure in benevolent acts is moral good; I may be the beneficiary of the act and hence also feel pleasure arising out of self-interest. If perceiving pleasure is the only thing that the moral sense does, then there would seem to be no way of distinguishing this pleasure from other sorts of pleasure. There must for Hutcheson be an idea of good at least



for the purpose of distinguishing moral pleasure from self-interested pleasure. But if this idea of good is to be simple, then it must be distinguished from the pleasure, and the moral sense would have two functions; perceiving good and perceiving pleasure. Hence the perceptions of the moral sense cannot be simply feelings of pleasure because Hutcheson has provided no criterion for distinguishing moral pleasures from non-moral pleasures.<sup>24</sup>

If pleasure is not inherent in the idea of good, then perhaps we can interpret Hutcheson as meaning to say that pleasure is distinct from the perception of good, but always accompanies the perception of good. There is, as I have suggested above, some textual support for this view. But interpreting the moral sense as a faculty which intuitively moral ideas which are then accompanied by the quite separate ideas of pleasure and pain, creates a problem for the moral theory as a whole. Pleasure and pain are obviously value laden concepts; and the role of them in Hutcheson's moral theory and theory of motivation indicate that he wants to, and indeed must, keep their value connotations. This value system inherent in pleasure and pain becomes written into the perceptions of the internal senses. Pleasure accompanies our ideas of beauty, honour, and moral rightness;<sup>25</sup> and thus we value the things to which we perceive these things as belonging.

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24. It is interesting to note that Hume uses a theory of impartiality to solve this problem; see the appendix to this section.

25. It is interesting to note in passing that all of the internal senses, (e.g. sense of beauty, honour, etc.), have the same relation to pleasure and pain that the moral sense has. Thus the question of whether pleasure and pain accompanies or is part of the ideas perceived by the internal senses arises in the same fashion for all of the internal senses.

pain, or unpleasantness, accompanies our ideas of ugliness,<sup>26</sup> dishonour, and moral evil; and thus we place a negative value on those things to which we apply these ideas. The only source of value for Hutcheson is pleasure and pain, and thus the value content of the internal senses must lie in their relation to pleasure and pain. This must apply to the moral sense, and hence any value we attach to goodness must on every occasion, come from the pleasure it gives us when we contemplate it.

If this is indeed the correct interpretation of Hutcheson on this point, then it would seem that it is a very serious fault in his theory. That that which is good is more valuable than that which is evil seems to me to be an inherent part of the idea of goodness. It seems logically incoherent to reverse the value of good and evil. Surely it is a contradiction, not just a factual error, to say: that was a very evil act and therefore of great value. Yet for Hutcheson the claim that evil actions are of great value is only contingently, or factually, false. If the interpretation which premises this argument is correct, its falsity is dependent upon the empirical fact that pain, not pleasure, accompanies our perceptions of evil. But if value connotations must be inherent in the ideas of good and evil as I suggest, then Hutcheson has committed an error if he has separated these ideas from their source of value, which for him is their pleasure and pain. The relation between good and the value of goodness becomes contingent on human nature. It was noted earlier

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26. Actually, Hutcheson doubts that the sense of beauty has a negative side; that is, he doubts that ugliness causes pain. I think the new Edinburgh University Student Centre proves him wrong on this point.

that the relation between good and benevolence is also contingent on human nature for Hutcheson. His contemporaries objected to this, but Hutcheson replied that the natural necessity inherent in human nature is sufficient to connect the idea of good with good actions. Now we have a similar objection. If it is only human nature which finds the idea of good pleasant, if pleasantness is not logically inherent in the idea of good, then good can be related to pleasantness by at most a natural necessity. But this is much more serious than the other objection; Hutcheson could accept a contingent relationship between good and benevolence; I do not think he would have accepted, nor could have accepted, a contingent relationship between goodness and the value of goodness. Such a possibility does too much violence to morality as a source of valuation.

This objection to Hutcheson's suggestion that pleasure should accompany perception of good by the moral sense, is a fundamental problem for all intuitionist moral theories which are based on an analogy with sense perception. If moral ideas are intuited, then a value system must be intuited as inherent in them. This undermines all possibility of analogy with sense perception. If moral ideas are intuited neutrally, and their value comes from some outside source such as accompanying pleasures and pains, then the contingent nature of the resulting relation between goodness and the source of its value does violence to our conception of morality as inherently value-laden.

I draw the conclusion from the discussion of this section that it is impossible to determine whether Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense should be classified as an emotivist or intuitionist theory.

I conclude this for two reasons: firstly, because it is impossible to determine whether the reactions of the moral sense are perceptions or emotions; and secondly, because it is impossible to determine whether the reactions of the moral sense are accompanied by pleasure and pain, or whether they are a form of pleasure and pain.

That Hutcheson is ambiguous on the emotivist-intuitionist issue has been noted by other authors. For example, Swabey remarks on the vagueness of the moral sense theory in this respect,<sup>27</sup> and Norton argues at length for a similar conclusion.<sup>28</sup>

#### Appendix

It is perhaps worth adding that it is this problem of identifying the pleasures of the moral sense that the impartial spectator theory in Hume was intended to solve. There can be no question that for Hume the moral sense was the faculty of moral feeling, and not of the intuition of ideas; the perception of good and evil was a particular type of pleasure or pain. As I have argued above, if this is the case, there must be some way of distinguishing moral pleasures from other types of pleasure; there must be some way of identifying moral feelings. The proposed answer, in a word, is that moral feelings are the feelings that result when one assumes the viewpoint of an impartial spectator. Hume does not use the expression 'impartial spectator'; he does use the expressions "a judicious spectator", "every spectator", and "every bystander".<sup>29</sup> Hume's suggestion is that since a person cannot expect

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27. Swabey, p. 83, 98.

28. Norton, *passim*.

29. Raphael, "The Impartial Spectator", p. 8.

other people to sympathize with his self-love, "he must here, therefore, depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to him with others; he must move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string to which all mankind have an accord and sympathy."<sup>30</sup> An "affection of humanity", since it is the only affection common to all men, "can alone be the foundation of morals, or of any general system of praise and blame."<sup>31</sup> I think this passage in Hume's Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals supports my suggestion that Hume uses his version of the impartial spectator theory as a means of identifying which of our feelings are moral feelings and which are not. Those affections are moral affections which "every bystander", or the "judicious spectator", can sympathize with.

This placing of the condition of impartiality on the moral perceptions has its origins in Hutcheson, but for Hutcheson the conditions are on the conceptions of the action, not on the resulting reactions of the moral sense. I think it fair to say that Hutcheson did not see a problem in identifying the perceptions of the moral sense; we just know what is moral approval and what is not. At one point he suggests that this may require some care: "In our sentiments of actions which affect ourselves, there is indeed a mixture of the ideas of natural and moral good, which require some attention to separate them" (Inquiry, p. 114). But this definitely suggests that with due attention they can be separated. No criterion is explicitly suggested, but the next line perhaps contains a hint of what Hutcheson

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30. Hume, Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 272.

31. Hume, Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, p. 273.

would have said if confronted with the problem; "But when we reflect upon the actions which affect other persons only, we may observe the moral ideas unmix'd with those of (natural) good and evil" (Inquiry, p. 114). It needs only be added that moral ideas in the cases where we are interested can be identified by comparison with the cases where we are not, and one has the rudiments of the impartial spectator theory. Hutcheson would certainly have been able to elaborate just what constituted impartiality, for he does so at length in another context. However, it must be emphasized that Hutcheson develops notions of impartiality in the context of establishing the nature of the idea to which the moral sense reacts. He does not need to apply the impartial spectator theory to the moral sense itself, for the moral sense cannot be influenced by self-interest, and the perceptions of the moral sense can be identified simply by reflection.

#### v. Moral Sense and Motivation

The third and final aspect of the normative content of moral ideas is their ability to motivate. Moral motivation is an exceedingly complex problem for Hutcheson, sufficient to warrant a chapter on its own. Here I will only summarize a few of the main points, so that the conclusions to this chapter will reflect all aspects of the moral sense.

Pleasures and pains are for Hutcheson the only source of desires. The moral sense is a source of pleasure and pain, and therefore it is a source of desires; it is in fact the source of such desires as the desire for self-approbation. Thus the moral sense can motivate action through this sort of desire. But it must hurriedly be added

that no motive which originates in the pleasures and pains of the moral sense can be the motive for morally good acts; benevolence is the only possible motive for virtuous acts. Self-approbation is a self-interested motive, and hence will not be approved by the moral sense. Thus, although the moral sense can motivate action, it cannot motivate virtuous action.

What then is the point to the moral sense? What is the point of recognizing which actions are morally good if this can never help us to be virtuous? Hutcheson's answer is that although moral knowledge cannot be a direct motive for virtuous action, the pleasures and pains of the moral sense can indirectly lead us to act more virtuously. Benevolent motives are often overcome by competing self-interested motives. The fact that the moral sense gives us pleasure, and a very considerable pleasure, in exercising our benevolence is a powerful self-interested motive which always favours the same actions as our benevolent motives. Thus the moral sense provides a motive which can act as a counter-balance to the self-interested motives which threaten to overcome benevolence. This does not increase the benevolent motive, and hence it does not increase the virtue of the action, but it does make the virtuous action more likely to result by eliminating the competition, as it were. The moral sense also influences our actions in another indirect way: the prospect of the pleasure of being virtuous causes us to study how to increase the actions done from the benevolence in our nature. This can be done either by trying to decrease any self-interested motives which might compete with benevolence, (an objective best accomplished by contemplating the pleasures provided by the moral sense), or by actually trying to

increase one's benevolent desires. This can only be accomplished indirectly by such methods as trying to find out the good points of others, and not making similar efforts to find out their bad.

The conclusion which results from this is that the moral sense cannot motivate us directly to virtuous actions. But it can motivate us to control our other desires and beliefs in such a way that we are more virtuous. Thus the direct objects of the actions motivated by the moral sense are always our desires and beliefs. This means in effect that the scope of the moral sense in influencing us towards good actions is all within our own nature. It does not directly influence the way we behave.

This section is a summary of the relation between the moral sense and motivation. It is intended to show that the moral sense does not provide the motive for good acts directly, but that it does have a role in influencing a person's nature, and hence his actions indirectly. This control the moral sense exercises because of the structure of human nature, a point which Hutcheson begins to mention in his second book (i.e. the *Essay* and the *Illustrations*), but it is developed more thoroughly in the '*System*' where he talks of the moral perfection of our nature (*System*, p. xiv, 61, 114). If fully developed, the theory indicates that although actions are good because of the approval of the moral sense, people are good in virtue of whether their personality conforms to the correct hierarchy of influences inherent in the structure of human nature. The position of the moral sense in this structure must be considered part of the normative content of its perceptions. All of these topics are discussed in more detail below in Chapter 5.



## vi. Summary

I will now summarize the conclusions I have drawn throughout this chapter.

From the fact that the moral sense is a sense, one can immediately conclude that some moral ideas are simple, and that moral ideas arise in the mind independently of direct human volition.

Classifying the moral sense as an internal sense implies that moral ideas arise subsequent to and in reaction to some other ideas which are already in the mind. It was found that moral ideas arise when the mind has an idea of, or conception of, a human action, including the motive and likely consequences of the action as well as any part of the action which might be perceivable.

Hutcheson favours the parallel between moral ideas and ideas of secondary qualities, rather than a parallel between moral ideas and primary qualities, on the grounds that the theory of secondary qualities is not a representationalist theory. Hutcheson's moral theory is not a representationalist theory, nor is it a naively realistic theory. Moral ideas are not images of any quality in the actions. But there are qualities in the action which are the occasion for moral ideas. What is the connexion between these good-inclining qualities and the idea of good?

The connexion between goodness and benevolence appears necessary to us in that we are determined by our nature to perceive them as connected. But this is not a logical necessity; it is contingent on the way God created human nature. This combination of one form of necessity and another form of contingency is somewhat similar to that which exists in the case of secondary qualities. But there seems a

type of necessity in morality not found in the perceptions of secondary qualities, but which seems similar to that found in the perceptions of concomitant ideas.

In the discussion of the sources of moral error, it was shown that although the moral sense is never in error, there are still criteria for judging the accuracy of one's moral judgements, and for judging who is in the best position to make a particular moral judgement.

All of the above are conclusions arrived at by viewing the moral sense as a sense. But moral ideas also have a normative content. It was noted that there is a problem in reconciling the normative and non-normative aspects of the moral sense. The external senses have none of the three aspects of the moral sense which make it normative, and this tends to undermine the analogy between the external and internal senses.

The three normative aspects of the moral sense are its role in the justification of approval, its relation to pleasure and pain, and its ability to motivate action.

The moral sense does not justify our approval of benevolence; this approval is what the moral sense does, and is beyond justification. But this approval provides the basis for justifying our approval of all means which enhance benevolent ends.

It is not clear whether the perceptions of the moral sense are a form of pleasure and pain, or whether they are accompanied by pleasure and pain. And hence it is not clear whether Hutcheson is an emotivist or an intuitionist. In general, I think it can be said that his analysis of the non-normative aspects of the moral sense favour an

intuitionist approach, and that the normative aspects of his theory favour an emotivist approach. There seems to be some difficulty in reconciling these two aspects of his theory.

Finally, the moral sense can motivate action, but it does not motivate virtuous action directly. Rather it plays a role in controlling the structure of our personality, from which virtuous actions hopefully result.

Hutcheson's moral sense theory must be seen in all these aspects. There can be no simple statement of the nature of the moral sense, and hence no simple definition of the good.

#### 4. Benevolence

##### i. Benevolence - First Version

In the previous chapter, I simply assumed that for Hutcheson, only acts motivated by benevolent desires could be morally good, and that the moral goodness of an act consists in its being so motivated. But Hutcheson's theory of benevolent desires and how they motivate is by no means simple. I will therefore consider it in detail in this chapter.

Part of the complexity of Hutcheson's remarks on benevolence stems from the fact that he held two separate theories of benevolence at different times. The first of these is most clearly expounded in his first book, the 'Inquiry'. There the second theory is not mentioned at all,<sup>1</sup> and so only the first theory is used in the discussions of benevolence. By the time he came to write his second book, the 'Essay' and the 'Illustrations', in 1726, Hutcheson had read Butler's Fifteen Sermons which had been published that year. Under this influence, Hutcheson greatly changed his thoughts on benevolence, and, perhaps even more importantly, also changed the relation between the moral sense, benevolence, and the motivation of virtuous actions. However, it is my opinion that this second theory was superimposed on the first theory; the earlier view of benevolence was never dropped, but was only supplemented and made more complicated in the later writings. In fact, the earlier view is present even in the 'System'. I hope it will become clear from

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1. At least in the second edition (1726). Some of the corrections in the fourth edition refer to or presuppose the second version.

my exposition of these two theories that they are quite consistent, or even complementary with each other; there is certainly no problem involved in Hutcheson's advocating both of these theories at once. The significance of the two theories is rather in this: adopting the second theory necessitates a change in the theory of how moral knowledge, as supplied by the moral sense, influences and controls our desires and leads to benevolent action. In brief, the second theory leads to a rather complicated theory of the structure of human nature, whereas under the first theory in the 'Inquiry', the moral sense influences our actions rather more directly. I will explicate these two theories of benevolence in turn in this chapter, and discuss their relation to the problem of motivation in Chapter 5.

In the 'Inquiry', benevolent desires are all particular, never general. In fact, the distinction between particular and general desires is not drawn in that book, and plays no role in the theory. Furthermore, benevolent desires appear to be all violent to some degree or other; that is, they are all accompanied by sensations of pleasure or pain. Hutcheson does not actually distinguish calm and violent desires in this book, and hence his theory of calm desires plays no role in his early theory of benevolence. Nor is the distinction between desires and passions clear in the 'Inquiry', and hence it is not at all clear whether benevolence is a passion or desire.<sup>2</sup> It may be, of course, that some benevolent affections are passions and some are desires. This last question, of whether particular benevolent affections are passions or desires, remains

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2. For an explanation of the distinctions between general and particular desires, violent and calm desires, and passions and desires, cf. above, sec. 2-ii-b and c.

throughout all of Hutcheson's works, and I will have occasion to discuss it again.<sup>3</sup> The question, taken out of Hutcheson's terminology, is whether particular benevolent affections are direct impulses towards the good of others, (i.e., are passions), or whether they presuppose some prior belief about natural good and evil, (i.e. are desires). Sexual lust is obviously the former, but is not considered a form of benevolence by Hutcheson even though directed towards others. On the other hand, affection for one's children is a form of benevolence, but it is not clear whether this is a passion or a desire, or sometimes one and sometimes the other. Hutcheson's first theory of benevolence is not clear on this point, and his theory of particular desires remains unclear. This question does not arise in the case of the calm general benevolence advocated in later books, for passions can be neither calm nor general.

In summary, benevolent affections in the 'Inquiry' appear to be particular, and violent, and perhaps being, or containing an element of, passionate impulse. The theory of calm general benevolence is not yet advocated. Examples of benevolent affections given in the 'Inquiry' are affection toward our offspring, gratitude towards a benefactor, (Inquiry, p. 142), and any desire to see our friends, country, or relations happy, (Inquiry, p. 148). In the 'Inquiry', benevolence is viewed as an emotion; it is in fact sometimes called 'love'. The later theory of calm general benevolence decreases the emotional content of benevolence, and increases the emphasis on the motivational non-emotional side of benevolence.

The argument in the 'Inquiry' is intended to prove two basic

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3. Cf. below, sec. 4-ii.

points; to wit, that our moral approval of virtuous actions is not founded on any view of self-interest, and that we have benevolent affections which are independent of our self-interested desires. Hutcheson's arguments for the latter of these points is discussed in section iii of this chapter; the aspect of these arguments that must be noted here is what exactly Hutcheson is claiming with respect to the benevolent affections.<sup>4</sup> His claim is that benevolent affections do not arise from any view of what is in our own interests; he claims, in other words, that being benevolent or having benevolent desires is not a means to satisfying some self-interested end. Benevolence is inherent in human nature and is not reducible to self-interest in the sense of resulting from some self-interested desire. We have, of course, the desire to fulfil our benevolent desires, and this may be viewed as a self-interested desire in so far as our benevolent desires are indeed our own desires; but this self-interested desire for satisfying benevolent desires presupposes those benevolent desires, and hence could not be the cause of them.

Because he thinks they are not reducible to self-interested desires, Hutcheson uses the word 'disinterested' to describe benevolent desires. But to say that benevolence is disinterested is not to say that it is objective or unbiased. Benevolent desires may not be caused by or reducible to self-interested desires, but for Hutcheson they are greatly affected by the good done to us by others.

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4. The chapter of the 'Inquiry' dealing with these arguments was substantially re-written between the second and fourth editions. It is the former version I comment on here, (2nd edition, p. 142-161). The fourth edition dates from after the 'Essay.'

Our feelings of benevolence are greater for those who show benevolence towards ourselves or those we love.<sup>5</sup> The increased benevolence we feel for those who are benevolent towards ourselves Hutcheson calls by the normal English word of 'gratitude'. He argues, and I think correctly argues, that the existence of gratitude towards our benefactor does not reduce even this form of benevolence to self-interest; gratitude, he points out, is the result of good done towards us, and is not the means of obtaining good. Hence it is not self-interested. Hutcheson phrases the argument as follows:

"Nay, farther, is not our good-will the consequent of bounty, and not the means of procuring it? External shew, obsequiousness, and dissimulation may precede an opinion of beneficence; but real love always presupposes it, and will necessarily arise even when we expect no more, from consideration of past benefits." (Inquiry, p. 156; the second edition has 'love always' for 'good-will' in the first line.)

In summary, Hutcheson argues that benevolent feelings are disinterested; that is, that they are not reducible to self-interest. However, he admits that our benevolent feelings are biased in favour of those who are benevolent towards us or those we love; this he calls 'gratitude'. He also claims that benevolence is biased in favour of those near us, for example, (and especially), our children.

In the 'Inquiry', benevolent affections are normally accompanied by sensations of pleasure or uneasiness, but even at this early stage in the development of his thought Hutcheson explicitly argues that it is not this concomitant pleasure or uneasiness which motivates us to

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5. It is questionable whether this is always true. When a person is dependent on a benefactor, for instance, he sometimes resents the relationship, even though he benefits from it.



do benevolent acts (Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 152). He forgets to argue explicitly that we do not do benevolent acts for the pleasures of self-approval (though he has added this by the time of the fourth edition, Inquiry, p. 141-142), but that he did not view this as a possibility is clear from his argument that the motive to virtue cannot be any sort of reward (Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 149-151), for the pleasure of self-approbation has the same nature as a reward in this context. So despite the fact that in this early discussion of benevolence, benevolence is never calm (a fact made obvious by his use of the term 'love' for benevolent feelings throughout), it is not the accompanying feelings which motivate benevolent actions. Just how benevolent feelings do motivate us, Hutcheson does not attempt to answer at this stage. His comment on the matter is this:

"If any enquire, Whence arises this love of esteem, or benevolence, to good men, or to mankind in general, if not from some nice views of self-interest? Or, how we can be mov'd to desire the happiness of others, without any view to our own? It may be answer'd, That the same cause which determines us to pursue happiness for our selves, determines us both to esteem and benevolence on their proper occasions; even the very frame of our nature, or a generous instinct,..."  
(Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 142).

It is interesting to note that this passage is omitted in the fourth edition, though it is not clear why. In his later works, Hutcheson drops the use of the word 'love' for benevolent affections, and is much clearer that benevolence is a desire (not a passion) which is sometimes accompanied by passionate feelings. His theory of desires makes clear how benevolence can motivate action, thus improving on his earlier version.

The development of Hutcheson's thinking on benevolence after the 'Inquiry' changed an important aspect of his overall moral theory:

to wit, it changed the relation between the moral sense and benevolence. As I have emphasized above, Hutcheson's later theory of benevolence was largely a clarification and development of his earlier theory, and not a rejection of it. But the relation between the moral sense and benevolence did change substantially, leading to the development of a very complex theory of how moral knowledge can motivate virtuous actions. I think, therefore, that the earlier theory of the motivation of virtuous actions should be explained here; the later more complex theory is explained in Chapter 5. The following discussion will also serve to emphasize the nature of benevolence as a passion in the 'Inquiry', rather than as a desire as it was later to become.

In the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson mentions several ways in which the moral sense influences human actions. The most straightforward of these is the desire of honour amongst our fellow men. We find pleasant the moral approval of our actions by those around us, and so there arises within us the desire for this honour; this desire for honour can, of course, influence our actions. The desire of honour presupposes that those around the person with the desire have a moral sense, for the satisfaction of the desire is dependent on their moral approval. (Hutcheson also adds that love of honour presupposes a moral sense in the person who has the desire; *Inquiry*, p. 225.) Thus the desire for honour is dependent on the existence of the moral sense in mankind in general.

Even at the early stage of his development when he wrote the first editions of the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson realized that the desire for honour was a self-interested desire.<sup>6</sup> He says explicitly: "Now

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6. One has to be careful not to confuse Hutcheson's views on honour with his views on compassion or pity, which he discusses in the same chapter. Compassion is not a self-interested motive, and hence may be the motive for virtuous actions, (*Inquiry*, p. 239).

it is certain, that ambition, or the love of honour, is really selfish;..." (Inquiry, p. 225). Since it is a self-interested desire, and hence not a benevolent desire, the desire for honour can never be a virtuous motive. The moral sense will never approve of the desire for honour or the actions it motivates. What then, is the point of the moral sense influencing our actions in this way? Hutcheson replies that the desire for honour, though self-interested, tends to motivate the same actions as benevolence. Hence, though the desire for honour does not increase the virtue of an action, it provides an additional self-interested motive for pursuing the good of others. This makes doing such actions more likely than if benevolence were the only motive. In the following passage, Hutcheson uses 'ambition' as a synonym for 'desire of honour':

"And let it be observ'd, that if we knew an agent had no other motive of action than ambition, we should apprehend no virtue even in his most useful actions, since they flow'd not from any love to others, or desire to their happiness. When honour is thus constituted by Nature pleasant to us, it may be an additional motive to virtue, as, we said above, the pleasure arising from reflection on our benevolence was: but the person whom we imagine perfectly virtuous, acts immediately from the love of others; however these refin'd interests may be joint motives to him to set about such a course of actions, or to cultivate every kind inclination, and to despise every contrary interest, as giving a smaller happiness than reflection on his own virtue, and consciousness of the esteem of others." (Inquiry, p. 225-226)

The primary point of this passage is to show that honour is a self-interested motive, but that it may combine with benevolence and be an additional motive for benevolent actions. But attention should be drawn to one phrase of the quotation; namely, to the phrase "or to cultivate every kind inclination". This idea that self-interest is a motive for cultivating benevolent affections is an essential part of

Hutcheson's later theory of how the moral sense motivates actions; the curious thing about its inclusion in this passage is that the second and fourth editions both read the same at this point. Usually, references in the 'Inquiry' to the idea of cultivating benevolence (eg Inquiry, p. 197) are later additions. Its presence on one occasion in the earlier edition probably indicates that Hutcheson was aware of the idea before it became a central part of his theory.

In the 'Inquiry', there are several other suggestions of how the moral sense influences our actions. The presence of several undeveloped ideas on this topic indicate that Hutcheson was not too concerned with or conscious of the problem at this early date and that hence he had not worked out a consistent theory. On pages 120, 123, and several other places he mentions a "desire of virtue" without any explanation of what such a desire would be. Also on page 120, he claims that generosity, faith, humanity, and gratitude "excite our admiration, and love, and study of imitation". This idea that we have an immediate desire to imitate what the moral sense approves is not developed further. Hutcheson also suggests several times that the moral sense directly guides actions; he says, for example: "in the same manner he (the author of nature) has given us a moral sense to direct our actions." (Inquiry, p. 128-129). None of these suggestions is developed and I will therefore not go into them.

There is, however, one suggestion, unfortunately not developed either, which was probably Hutcheson's main opinion on this matter. In several places he says things which presuppose that our moral approval of a virtuous person partly consists of, or causes us to

feel, benevolence towards that person. In the second edition of the 'Inquiry' (p. 216) he begins section 5 by telling us he will be discussing the biases of our feelings of benevolence; he mentions natural affection and gratitude, and then goes on thus: "or when benevolence is increas'd by greater love of esteem." ('love of esteem' means the approval of the moral sense). Hutcheson never does discuss this suggestion directly, either in this section or elsewhere, and the phrase which I have just quoted was dropped in the fourth edition of the 'Inquiry' (cf. p. 218). There are, however, several passages in the 'Inquiry' where this causal influence of the moral sense on benevolence is mentioned or presupposed. For instance, in the preliminary definition of the moral sense with which he opens the 'Inquiry' he says, "The word moral goodness, in this Treatise, denotes our idea of some quality apprehended in actions, which procures approbation, attended with desire of the agent's happiness." (Inquiry, p. 105). In several places he suggests that moral approval is accompanied by, or causes, or contains, (it is not clear which), good-will; and good-will he equates with benevolence.<sup>7</sup> For example, he says: "All men who speak of moral good, acknowledge that it procures approbation and good-will toward those we apprehend possessed of it;..." (Inquiry, p. 106). Elsewhere, the influence of the moral sense on benevolence is presupposed but not directly referred to. For example, when he enumerates the differences between moral good and natural good, he says:

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7. To see that good-will and benevolence are similar for Hutcheson, consider this passage: "Suppose we reap the same advantage from two men, one of whom serves us from an ultimate desire of our happiness, or good-will toward us; the other from views of self-interest or by constraint:..." Inquiry, p. 113.

"For let it be here observ'd, that those senses by which we perceive pleasure in natural objects, whence they are constituted advantageous, could never raise in us any desire of publick good, but only of what was good to ourselves in particular." (Inquiry, p. 114)

The implication not stated is that the perception of moral good does "raise in us the desire of publick good". I conclude that, although he never explicitly discussed the question, when he first wrote the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson thought that the moral sense caused, or contained, feelings of benevolence towards those perceived as virtuous. This is not very strange when one considers that on the early theory, the moral sense gives us feelings of love, approval, or esteem of virtuous people, and that it is not a very great step to add that these feelings tend to include a desire for the virtuous man's good. Later, when the moral sense becomes more clearly a source of perceptions rather than feelings, to add desires to these perceptions would be a more questionable step.

In summary, Hutcheson's early theory of benevolence in the 'Inquiry' portrays benevolence as any feeling motivating us to consider the wants of others. These are normally particular feelings directed towards specific individuals, and include all of our social emotions which are not founded on self-interest. The perceptions of the moral sense are interpreted as feelings of love towards people who display benevolent affections. These feelings of the moral sense include or cause reciprocal benevolent affections to arise in us; these feelings may in turn cause us to do benevolent actions.

## ii. Benevolence - Second Version

In his second book, the 'Essay on the Passions', Hutcheson greatly develops and expands his theory of benevolence. I have been referring to this as the second version, but I should again emphasize that Hutcheson never rejects his analysis of particular benevolent affections. Rather he adds to it a theory of calm general benevolence, and makes related changes in other aspects of his theory of human nature. He introduces a structure of hierarchy to the various elements of human nature, and produces an elaborate theory of how this structure functions in producing actions, virtuous actions in particular. There can be little question that Hutcheson's theory of calm general benevolence was inspired by Butler's Fifteen Sermons; these had been published in the interval between the publication of the 'Inquiry' and the 'Essay'.

The distinctions between calm and violent, and between general and particular desires have been outlined in detail in Chapter 2 above. The application of these distinctions to benevolence is quite straightforward. A calm benevolent desire is one in which there are no accompanying sensations of pleasure or uneasiness. A violent, or as Hutcheson tends to refer to them, a passionate, benevolent desire, is one in which there are such accompanying sensations. For example, a nationalistic desire for the good of one's country might be passionate and violent; and abstract desire for the good of one's fellow countrymen might be quite calm. The violence of benevolent desires is, of course, a question of degree. Particular desires are desires which presuppose no other desires; thus my benevolent feelings

towards this particular down-and-out is unconnected with any other desires I may have. General desires are desires which take into account groups of other desires; thus a general desire to be benevolent to those who need help in my society will be an overall desire which encompasses my desire to help down-and-outs, my desire to donate blood, my desire to help old-age pensioners, etc. In the first version of the theory of benevolence, benevolent desires were particular and passionate: they were viewed as feelings of love towards other people, either singly or in groups. Now Hutcheson has added the possibilities of calm and general benevolence. These two factors, calmness and generalness, tend to go together for Hutcheson, but there is no necessity for them to do so. In introducing calm general benevolence, Hutcheson has shifted the emphasis in his discussion from the feeling or emotional aspects of benevolence, towards the desire or motivational content of benevolence.

The notion of generality with respect to benevolent desires requires further comment. It is important to note that generality when applied to benevolence is not related to the number of people towards whom the desire for good is directed; rather it is the presupposition of other desires which makes a desire general. For example, a fanatical Scotsman may feel hatred for all Englishmen; this hatred would be particular despite the large number of Englishmen in the world, if it were a fundamental hatred rather than a conglomeration of a great number of hatreds towards the English. Similarly for benevolence; I may feel a benevolent desire to help a great number of people, a family or a sect, for example, but if this desire is not the combination of a number of other desires to help various people, then



it is not a general desire in the sense that Hutcheson uses it in the 'Essay'. In the first version of his theory, Hutcheson clearly recognized that benevolence could be directed towards large numbers of people. Indeed it was in the 'Inquiry' (p. 181) that he first used the expression "the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers"; clearly this indicates that he was, even then, aware of the need for benevolence to be directed towards people in general. But the concept of generality used in the 'Essay' is quite different from this; generality involves numerous desires, not numerous people.

That this is the notion of generality which Hutcheson is using, is clear from a passage in which he discusses a related question. In the 'Illustrations', he points out that we do not form "some conception of an infinite good, or greatest possible aggregate, or sum of happiness, under which all particular pleasures may be included..." (Illustrations, p. 124). He argues that we do not have desires for the good of particular individuals because we have a general desire for the good of all mankind. Rather, it is the other way around; we have the general desire because we are capable of taking into account a number of particular desires. Thus the generalness of general desires must have to do with the fact that they subsume a number of particular desires, and not with the fact that they may be a desire for the good of the generality of mankind.

Further substantial evidence that it is generality of desires, not generality of people, that he means in the case of general benevolence, comes from the fact that he also talks in terms of general self-interested desires. In the case of self-interest, it makes no sense to talk in terms of the number of people whose good is sought.

The number is obviously always one. But one can still have a general desire for what is in one's own interests. The generality of such a desire comes from the fact that it presupposes, and takes into account several particular desires. It is a general desire for that which will satisfy as many particular desires as are mutually compatible. The generality of desires varies according to the number of particular desires which they take into account. The most general desires are general self-interest and general benevolence, though in the 'System' he also adds a general desire for moral perfection. (Cf. System, p. xiv). In the case of both general self-interest and general benevolence it is important to remember that their generality lies in the fact that they are desires for maximizing the satisfaction of several particular desires.

The importance of this theory of general desires lies in the relation between general and particular desires, and motivation. All desires can motivate, and the degree to which a desire can motivate depends on the strength of that desire. The strength of a desire depends on the amount of pleasure which it is believed that satisfying the desire will produce, plus the strength of the passionate element if there is one.<sup>8</sup> General desires, since they are desires for the maximization of a number of particular desires, can inherently promise more pleasure than any particular desire. They can thus overrule particular desires, particularly those taken into account in the maximization calculations. General desires can in this way control our particular desires, they consider and balance the pleasures which will result from various combinations of satisfying compatible desires,

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8. Cf. above, sec. 2-ii-d.

and motivate us towards the action which will give the maximum satisfaction. Since this is maximization of pleasure, general desires are stronger than particular desires and can overrule and control them.<sup>9</sup>

There are several things which should be noted about this theory of general desires controlling particular desires. Firstly, it may be observed that this theory is missing in the first version of the discussion of benevolence. There, benevolent affections seemed to be all particular, though the number of people they were directed towards varied. It was the function of the moral sense to control the various particular benevolent affections; it did this by tending to give rise to, or to increase, affections it approved of, and by adding self-interested motives tending to motivate the same actions as the benevolent desires. This function of the moral sense (and sense of honour), has now been dropped; the role of controlling particular benevolent desires is now the function of general benevolence. However, the moral sense on the new theory does have a role in deciding whether general benevolence or general self-interest will motivate our actions.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, it should be noted that general desires are normally calm. This derives from the fact that general desires presuppose the functioning of reasoning; general desires rely on estimates of which actions will lead to the greatest pleasures, and since this sort of estimation is the function of reason, general desires presuppose

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9. On the relation of this point to the question of freedom of the will, cf. above, sec. 2-ii-e.

10. Cf. below, chapter 5.

reasoning. Since reason can only function properly when not interfered with by the passions, it is important that general desires be calm. Otherwise the calculations on which they rest will be unreliable. This need for general desires to be calm does not ensure that they will be calm; but the mind's realization that general desires function more accurately in maximizing pleasure when they are not passionate, encourages us to keep them calm, and gives them added strength when they are so.

Thirdly, the only way in which a particular desire can be stronger than a general desire is by being passionate. Thus the question of the control of particular desires by general desires becomes the question of how passionate desires can be controlled by calm desires. Or, in other words, how do we control our passions?

Finally, for Hutcheson there are two desires at the most general level, benevolence and self-interest. General benevolence is founded on our desires for the good of others, self-interest is founded on our desires for our own good. Since Hutcheson provides no way of comparing the pleasures of others with our own pleasures, there is no way of calculating the maximization of the good which will result from a mixture of self-interested and benevolent desires. This means that for Hutcheson no general desire can be founded on a mixture of benevolent and self-interested desires, and it means that general benevolence and general self-interest can never be subsumed under an even more general desire. Hutcheson never attempts to use the controlling function of general desires as a solution to the problem of the conflict between self-interest and benevolence. This is basically because he does not think he has to. Rather he claims that

general self-interest and general benevolence never need to conflict. The role of general desires in controlling particular desires makes the question of how the two most general desires control or influence each other very important. I deal with their connexion in Chapter 5 below; here I merely note the origin of the problem which Hutcheson's theory that our greatest self-interest lies in being benevolent is meant to solve.

The relation between Hutcheson's theory of benevolence and his theory of the moral sense, is straightforward. The moral sense approves of actions which are motivated by benevolence. Or, in other words, actions motivated by benevolent desires can be said to be morally good. The moral sense approves of actions motivated either by particular benevolent desires, or by calm general desires, but it approves of the latter more than the former (cf. *Inquiry*, p. 183, this passage was added in the fourth edition; *Essay*, p. xvi, 32; *System*, p. 68-69). In the '*Inquiry*' it is sometimes suggested that the moral sense controls which one of the benevolent desires motivates. But in the later works, the calm general benevolent desires control the particular ones, and the moral sense has no function in directly controlling desires or behaviour. The method by which the moral sense controls actions indirectly by way of influencing beliefs, is discussed below in Chapter 5.

For Hutcheson, if a benevolent and a self-interested desire combine to motivate a particular action, then the moral worth of that action depends on the strength of the benevolent desire, a fact which is not influenced by the strength of the self-interested desire. In most cases, particularly when judging others, it will be very difficult

to establish the degree to which self-interest and benevolence are involved in the motivation of a particular act. In the early editions of the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson had provided mathematical equations for calculating the degree of benevolence involved by taking into account the self-interested desire and the motivation necessary for the act (Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 182-188). He dropped this in later editions and in his later works, probably because of the realization that it is impossible to determine with any accuracy, and certainly not quantitatively, the various degrees of benevolence and self-interest involved in particular acts.<sup>11</sup> This point is not important for the theory that the moral sense approves benevolence, for the degree of the benevolence which motivates a particular act must be established by reason and not by the moral sense (Illustrations, p. 159).

There are passages in Hutcheson's writings which may cause one to question that the moral sense approves only those actions motivated by benevolence; Hutcheson sometimes seems to suggest that the morality of actions depends not only on the motive, but on whether the action actually does enhance the happiness of the greatest number. Some modern commentators have accepted that for Hutcheson the morality of

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11. Bryson notes that Thomas Reid pointed out this error of Hutcheson's, and refers to a letter in the Transactions of the Royal Society (Vol. 45, 1748, p. 505-520) in which Reid discusses which sorts of quantities may be measured mathematically. The title of this letter says that it was "occasioned by reading a Treatise, in which simple and compound ratio's (sic) are applied to virtue and merit,...", but Hutcheson is not mentioned by name. Although this letter was not published till after Hutcheson's death, he possibly could have seen it, or similar communications of Reid's, before publishing the later editions of the 'Inquiry'; the letter as published was not directly from Reid, but via other people, and so may have been written long before publication.

actions depends on both the motive and the results.<sup>12</sup> However, I am convinced that those passages which suggest that the moral sense approves of the actual consequences and not the intended consequences of the action, are the result of careless writing and do not represent Hutcheson's considered opinion. Other aspects of Hutcheson's theories substantiate this interpretation. For example, why does Hutcheson need to develop the indirect method by which the moral sense influences our actions (which I outline in Chapter 5 below), if the virtue of an action does not necessarily reside in the motive? If actions which actually enhance the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers are for that reason virtuous, then the desire to do virtuous actions is the desire to do actions which promote general happiness. But that desire just is benevolence itself, and is not the desire to have benevolent desires which Hutcheson in fact uses to explain how the moral sense can make us more virtuous. There is no need for this meta-desire theory if the virtue of actions does not consist entirely in their motive and not in their actual results. One can therefore conclude that those passages in which Hutcheson seems to suggest that the virtue of actions may depend on the actual results do not represent his considered opinion.

Hutcheson's theory of benevolence requires one further comment, which also serves to introduce the topic of the next section. It will be remembered from the discussion of desires in Chapter 2 above, that for Hutcheson, desires differ from the passions by the fact that desires presuppose a belief about possible pleasures and pains, and passions do not. The central contention of Hutcheson's theory of benevolence is that desires can be caused in one person by beliefs

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12. Blackstone, p. 30-31.

about the possible pleasures and pains of another. And furthermore, that this causal link, and the resulting desire do not presuppose any beliefs about the first person's own self-interested pleasures. This contention had been questioned by Hobbes and others, a fact Hutcheson was well aware of, for he argued at length that those of Hobbes's persuasion on this point were in error. These arguments of Hutcheson's will be discussed in the next section. However, if the issue in those arguments is not stated as clearly as it is in this section, this is because it is primarily in the 'Inquiry' that Hutcheson argues against the egoists, and it is not until the 'Essay' that Hutcheson's theory of calm general benevolence becomes fully developed. To the arguments against the egoist we now turn.

### iii. Arguments against Hobbes and Mandeville

Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense and benevolence presupposes that human nature actually does contain benevolent desires. That people often do actions which appear to be benevolent, no one has ever denied. However, there have been philosophers who have maintained that appearance in this case is misleading; that in fact all actions which appear to be motivated by benevolence are actually motivated by self-love. Normally, such philosophers have then proceeded to argue that, or explain how, morality is based on self-interest. Hutcheson felt it incumbent on himself to refute such arguments. Usually he does not specify whose theory he is refuting, and for my purposes it does not matter, but it is clearly Hobbes or some of Hobbes' disciples whom he has in mind. In the few passages where he does attribute some version of the theory to a particular individual, it is Mandeville who



is mentioned.<sup>13</sup> I shall not attempt to establish the origins of the arguments Hutcheson is attacking, nor shall I attempt to establish that they are accurate versions of arguments which anyone ever held. I am only interested in how Hutcheson sets about defending his position from this line of attack as he sees it, and the light that his defence throws on the rest of his theory. Hutcheson uses in this defence many of the tenets he has established in other contexts, but I shall point out that on at least one important point (i.e. his attitude towards sympathy) his opinion seems to be determined by the requirements of his argument against Hobbes.<sup>14</sup>

I shall refer to those whom Hutcheson is arguing against as the egoists. It should be noticed that the issue is with psychological egoism: that is, in these arguments Hutcheson is concerned mainly to refute those who claim that man simply never does act from benevolence. To the ethical egoist, that is, to the person who maintains that one ought always to act from self-interest, Hutcheson's reply is an appeal to the moral sense. To those who claim that they just are going to act always in their own best interest while admitting that one can or even should be benevolent, Hutcheson replies with his proof that one's greatest happiness is to be found in being benevolent. These latter two arguments I deal with elsewhere;<sup>15</sup> this section is concerned with the psychological egoist.

The structure of the egoist's arguments determines the structure of Hutcheson's reply. The egoist does not deny that there are actions

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13. Cf. Inquiry, p. 124-125, and "Remarks on the Fable of the Bees".

14. Cf. below, section 5-iv.

15. Cf. above, chapter 3.

which appear benevolent; rather he claims that appearances are deceptive in these instances. The egoist's claim, therefore, depends on his ability to show convincingly how any particular benevolent-appearing act is in fact self-interested. This reduction of apparent benevolence to self-interest has been attempted in a variety of ways by different philosophers and in different contexts. This means that Hutcheson cannot reply to the egoists simply by claiming that a certain type of action is benevolent; that will always leave open the possibility of the egoist performing his reduction on that sort of act. The only way that Hutcheson can reply to the egoist is by showing that the various types of procedures the egoist uses for his reductions do not in fact work. This means that Hutcheson must reply to each of the procedures separately and hence that he can never produce a single argument which refutes all forms of psychological egoism. It also means that there is always the possibility of a new type of egoistic reduction which Hutcheson has not replied to, but I will not discuss any recent developments in this debate because my purpose in dealing with this topic is only to throw light on certain aspects of Hutcheson's thought. Hutcheson was aware that he had to reply to the various egoistic arguments separately; he explicitly points this out in the 'System': "But very different and contrary accounts are given, by these authors, of the private enjoyments and happiness pursued in the offices we commonly repute virtuous" (System, p. 39). This explains the great multitude of different arguments against egoism scattered throughout his works.<sup>16</sup>

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16. The main passages are: Inquiry, p. 105-165; Essay, p. 8-26, p. 86; Illustrations, p. 116-119; Introduction, p. 20, p. 304; System, p. 38-52, p. 75-76.

In understanding Hutcheson's various arguments it is important to notice the sort of benevolent desire which Hutcheson is defending. He is not defending desires for states of affairs or events which are viewed as objectively valuable - objective reasons as a recent writer has called them.<sup>17</sup> Nor is he defending directly a calm desire for the general good of mankind. He appears to think that these more difficult tasks are not necessary to refute the egoist. It is only the existence of particular benevolent desires which Hutcheson is trying to establish.<sup>18</sup> This is a legitimate procedure for Hutcheson even though he elsewhere claims that it is calm general benevolence which is morally approved. Since he views general desires as nothing other than the maximization of particular desires, if there are particular benevolent desires then there is at least the possibility of a general benevolent desire. It is thus acceptable for Hutcheson to establish particular benevolence against the egoist's denial of altruism.

In his long argument against the egoist in the 'Inquiry' (p. 105-165), Hutcheson divides his opponents into two types; those who claim that all actions are done from self-interest, and also claim that we approve virtuous actions because they are in our interests; and, on the other hand, those who admit that moral approval is not reducible to self-interest, but claim that all motivation is from self-interest. In other words, there are those who claim that both moral approval and

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17. Cf. Thomas Nagel, The Possibility of Altruism. Since for Nagel, reasons can motivate, reasons play a similar sort of role in his philosophy as desires play in Hutcheson's. It is interesting to note that Nagel's reasons and Hutcheson's desires are both closely linked with beliefs.

18. For a recent defence of this approach as applied to the ethical egoist, cf. B. Williams, Problems of the Self, paper 15, "Egoism and Altruism", p. 250-265.

benevolence are reducible to self-interest, and those who think benevolence is and moral approval is not so reducible (Inquiry, p. 108). The first chapter of the 'Inquiry' deals with the reduction of moral approval to self-interest. It is perhaps a bit of a digression for me to deal with this question, relating as it does to the moral sense, in a chapter on benevolence, but Hutcheson uses the independence of moral approval as a step in his argument against the psychological egoist. I will return to the argument in defence of benevolence after commenting on the argument in defence of the objectivity of moral approval.

Hutcheson spends most of the first chapter of the 'Inquiry' establishing that our moral approval is not the same as, and is not reducible to, our approval of what is in our own interests; he also often returns to this point throughout the rest of his works. His main argument, which he presents in various forms to meet various types of reductions, is that we are directly aware by reflection on particular examples that our moral and self-interested attitudes are different from each other. "That the perceptions of moral good and evil, are perfectly different from those of natural good or advantage, everyone must convince himself, by reflecting upon the different manner in which he finds himself affected when these objects occur to him." (Inquiry, p. 111).

In replying to each of the various methods of reducing moral approval to self-interest, Hutcheson's procedure is to present an example in which moral approval favours one act and our self-interest favours another. On Hutcheson's own theory, this means finding an example of a situation in which the pursuit of the general good would

entail a different act than that most in the agent's interest. In practice, however, Hutcheson in this chapter tends not to appeal to general benevolence specifically, but relies on the plausibility of our approving the sort of action normally approved of: kindness, heroism, statesmanship, etc. Hutcheson's own statement of his procedure is to be found near the beginning of this chapter. There he explains that the correct approach is to think of examples in which self-interest and morality are separate:

"In our sentiments of actions which affect ourselves, there is indeed a mixture of the ideas of natural and moral good, which require some attention to separate them. But when we reflect upon the actions which affect other persons only, we may observe the moral ideas unmix'd with those of natural good or evil." (Inquiry, p. 114).

Since most of the arguments in this chapter use basically the same techniques, I will only give one example of how the procedure works. In section IV, Hutcheson considers the argument that we approve of actions aimed towards the general good because since we are part of society, the general good rebounds to our private benefit. He replies to this by asking us to consider an example in which our self-interest is not involved; for example, consider the case of a past or distant society. Here the general good is not in our interest, for we are not members of the society in question. But we still approve of morally good acts performed by members of that society. Thus by considering an example where our self-interest is not involved, we can see that moral and self-interest approval are distinct. Perhaps this point is made even more forcefully if we consider a case where our self-interest is involved, but in which it leads to different approval than the moral sense. Consider the finding of a buried Greek

treasure (*Inquiry*, p. 119); the miser who buried it acted greatly to our advantage, but yet we do not confer the same approval on his action as we do on the actions of Greek heroes, even though we do not benefit from the latter and we do from the former. All of these arguments rest on the assumption that we do approve morally of the actions which Hutcheson suggests we do. But this would not normally be denied by Hutcheson's opponents, though they may of course object to particular examples. His opponents are not arguing that we do not approve morally; they are arguing that normal moral approval is reducible to self-interest. Hutcheson is replying to various suggested reductions by giving examples where normal moral approval and self-interested approval diverge. So his assuming normal moral approval is not a begging of the question.

I think that it should be noted here precisely what it is that Hutcheson has proved. In showing that the dictates of self-interest and the perceptions of the moral sense sometimes diverge or even conflict, Hutcheson has shown that self-interest and morality are two different things. They have to be different if they are to give rise to different views of the same actions. However, Hutcheson has not shown that self-interest does not affect the moral sense. Even if self-interest and morality conflict on an issue, it is still logically possible that the perceptions of the moral sense would have been different if self-interest was not involved at all. Hutcheson presents no argument to eliminate this possibility, a fact which I will mention again later in this section.

Hutcheson sometimes resorts to forms of argumentation other than those in which he invites us to consider examples in which self-interest

and moral approval diverge. For example, he points out that our moral approval does not depend on our seeing the connexion between the approved action and our interests. We all approve of virtuous actions, but we do not all have the philosophical abilities to perform the reduction to self-interest. "But must a man have the reflection of Cumberland or Pufendorf, to admire generosity, faith, humanity, gratitude?" (*Inquiry*, p. 119). Or again, he argues that we do not approve of virtue because of God's promised rewards, on the grounds that even atheists sometimes approve morally (*Inquiry*, p. 122). But all these arguments, whether by example or otherwise, rest on an attempt to separate moral approval from self-interest in such a way that the egoist's reduction of the one to the other must fail.

I think that Hutcheson's approach can show that moral and self-interested approval are not the same thing; one should always with a little imagination be able to think of an example in which the act we morally disapprove of is the act most in our interest. But Hutcheson does not seem to rest his case on the claim that moral approval and self-interest are distinct. He draws the further much stronger and more questionable conclusion that self-interest does not bias our moral opinions. His main argument for this is the claim that the moral sense cannot be bribed (*Inquiry*, p. 121). I do not think anyone has ever suggested that one's moral opinions could be swayed by self-interest in so crude a fashion as bribery, and Hutcheson does not deal with more subtle versions of biased moral belief. But he seems to think that he has proved that moral approval is beyond the bias of self-interest altogether; he thinks that our own interests have no more effect on our moral perceptions than anyone else's

interests. This passage is typical:

"But no interest to myself, will make me approve an action as morally good, which without that interest to myself, would have appear'd morally evil; if upon computing its whole effects, it appears to produce as great a moment of good in the whole, when it is not beneficial to me, as it did before, when it was. In our sense of moral good or evil, our own private advantage or loss is of no more moment, than the advantage or loss of a third person, to make an action appear good or evil. This sense therefore cannot be overbalanc'd by interest. How ridiculous an attempt would it be, to engage a man by rewards or threatnings into a good opinion of an action, which was contrary to his moral notions?" (Inquiry, p. 123-124).

The significance, for the other aspects of Hutcheson's theory, of the claim that the moral sense cannot be biased by self-interest has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis.<sup>19</sup> Briefly, it means that Hutcheson must locate the source of moral error in our opinions of the nature of the actions rather than in the perceptions of the moral sense. It also means that Hutcheson did not have to develop the impartial spectator theory, although the rudiments of that theory are to be found in his writings. Why does one need to consider the impartial spectator if the moral sense is completely beyond the influence of our self-love? The point I wish to make here is that the opinion which has these rather far-reaching implications for Hutcheson's philosophy, comes from his attempts to refute the view that moral approval is reducible to self-interest. Furthermore, I wish to suggest that Hutcheson has made an error here. What he needs to prove, and what his arguments do in fact prove, is that moral approval and self-interested approval are two different things in the

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19. Cf. above, chapter 3, sec. ii.



sense that moral approval is not just the approval of what is in our own interests. What he has not proved, what he does not need to prove to refute the egoists, but what he thinks he has proved, is that moral approval cannot be biased at all by self-interest. The moral sense can be influenced by our self-interest because our own interests count as much as anyone else's, assuming equal merit. But, as the long quotation above makes clear, Hutcheson thinks that the moral sense cannot be biased by our self-interest, for the influence on our moral sense of own own interests is no greater than that of the interests of anyone else: "In our sense of moral good or evil, our own private advantage or loss is of no more moment, than the advantage or loss of a third person, to make an action appear good or evil." (Inquiry, p. 123-124). Hutcheson's arguments as I have outlined them above do not prove this; they merely prove that self-interest and moral approval are not the same thing.

Hutcheson's conclusion that moral approval is independent of self-interest is used in one of his arguments against the psychological egoists. I wish now to consider his arguments to prove that human nature does contain benevolent desires, and that people do in fact sometimes act out of concern for the interests of others. As I mentioned above, it is particular benevolent desires that Hutcheson wishes to establish. I have also mentioned that Hutcheson must reply to each type of egoist's reduction; he does not have a single refutation of all forms of psychological egoism.

A word on Hutcheson's texts must be inserted here. Hutcheson presents his arguments against the egoists in the 'Inquiry', Section II; the 'Essay', Section I; and the 'System', Chapter 3. Each of these

presentations uses very much the same approach; the development of Hutcheson's philosophy did not greatly influence these arguments, perhaps because the point of these arguments is to prove the existence of particular benevolent desires, and such desires were part of his philosophy from the start. However, Hutcheson became much clearer in the presentation of his position. This is best seen by comparing the second and the fourth editions<sup>20</sup> of the 'Inquiry'. Hutcheson substantially rewrote Section II between these two editions, and it is perhaps worth noting the major changes. Firstly, it is most striking that he has rearranged the order of the numbered sub-sections, and sometimes of paragraphs within these. The reason for this would appear to be that he is clearer on the structure of his argument. In the fourth edition, he largely rewrote sub-sections IV and V (Inquiry, p. 138-150). In the later edition, these begin with the phrase "There are two ways in which some may deduce benevolence from self-love..." It is the difference between these two types of reductionist claims that Hutcheson is clearer on by the fourth edition, and which caused him to revise this chapter. However, the difference between the types of reductions is found as early as the 'Essay', although in a much less clear presentation.

The other differences between the second and the fourth editions are largely in bringing his terminology and references to other aspects of his theory into line with his later opinions. For example, in the first version of the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson tends to confuse the moral sense and benevolence, partly because he tries to use the terms "love of complacence" and "love of benevolence". He is later much clearer

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20. The fourth edition dates from 1738, and hence was published about the same time that Hutcheson was writing the System. Cf. Scott, p. 210.

on the difference, and so adds to the fourth edition a couple of sentences to make this difference clearer: "Complacence denotes approbation of any person by our moral sense; and is rather a perception than an affection; tho' the affection of good-will is ordinarily subsequent to it. Benevolence is the desire of the happiness of another" (Inquiry, p. 135). The development of Hutcheson's thought in general is discussed elsewhere in this thesis; the changes in this chapter of the 'Inquiry' are generally in conformity with these. However, I will later in this section quote one remark from the second edition which was dropped in the fourth edition where the reason for this is not clear. The following discussion follows mainly the fourth edition of the 'Inquiry', but reference will also be made to the 'Essay' and the 'System'.

Hutcheson decides that there are basically two sorts of methods by which the egoists have attempted to reduce benevolence to self-interest. Some argue that "we voluntarily bring this affection upon ourselves, whenever we have an opinion that it will be for our interest to have this affection..." (Inquiry, p. 138). Others argue that "our minds (are) determined by the frame of their nature to desire whatever is apprehended as the means of any private happiness; ... They alledge it to be impossible to desire either the happiness of another, or any event whatsoever, without conceiving it as the means of some happiness or pleasure to ourselves" (Inquiry, p. 138-139). In other words some argue that self-interest gives us grounds for wanting to have benevolent desires, and others argue that self-interest causes us to want other people to be happy. The first is a desire for a desire (i.e. benevolence) and the second a desire for a state of affairs

(i.e. the happiness of others).

Against the claim that we decide to have benevolent feelings because it is in our interests to do so, Hutcheson points out that two possible views of why it is in our interests rest on confusions.<sup>21</sup> Firstly, we cannot desire a desire so that we can have the pleasure which is concomitant with that desire. Hutcheson's main argument on this point is that desires are not normally accompanied by pleasure; if accompanied with any sensation, it is usually an uneasy feeling. "... desire of the good of others, which we approve as virtuous, cannot be alledged to be voluntarily raised from the prospect of any pleasure accompanying the affection itself: for 'tis plain that our benevolence is not always accompanied with pleasure; nay, 'tis often attended with pain, when the object is in distress" (Inquiry, p. 140). Nor do we desire benevolence for the pleasure of removing any uneasiness which may accompany the desire. This cannot be the case for Hutcheson because desires are distinct from, and are not necessarily accompanied by, uneasiness (cf. Essay, p. 44). This view involves a rejection of Locke's suggestion that the motivating force of a desire has its origins in wanting to get rid of the accompanying uneasiness (Essay, p. 24); Hutcheson's analysis of desire separates the desire (which is a simple idea), from any accompanying sensations.<sup>22</sup> Since any uneasiness is the result of having the desire, not the other way around, Hutcheson concludes that a desire cannot be "raised with a view to remove this uneasy sensation, for the desire is raised previously to it" (Essay, p. 16).

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21. The best presentation of these two arguments is in Essay p. 16-17.

22. Cf. above, chapter 2, sec. ii-c.

Secondly, we cannot have a self-interested desire for benevolent desires which is grounded in the expectation of the pleasure of satisfying those benevolent desires. This cannot be for Hutcheson because he has distinguished the object of desires from the pleasures of satisfying desires, and further pointed out that, as Jensen puts it, "it is logically impossible for a desire to have as its object its own gratification."<sup>23</sup> Hutcheson uses the argument that if we could raise desires simply for the pleasure of the gratification, then "the strongest desires might arise toward any trifle, or an event in all respects indifferent" (Essay, p. 17).

It may be noted that the arguments in the above two paragraphs have the form of Hutcheson refuting a particular attempt to reduce benevolence to self-interest by referring to a distinction he draws in his analysis of desire; in the first case he uses his distinction between desires and any accompanying sensations, and in the second case he uses his distinction between the object of a desire and the pleasures of satisfying that desire.

Hutcheson rejects a third self-interested reason which one might have for creating the desire of doing good for others. He points out that if we attempt to create benevolence with the view to gaining the self-approbation of the moral sense, then in fact the moral sense will not approve of such self-interest (Inquiry, p. 142). His next argument tries to undermine the whole procedure of claiming that we create benevolent desires for reasons of self-interest. He argues that we simply cannot create desires in ourselves for any reason whatsoever. This he views as an empirical claim, but one which can

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23. Jensen, p. 17.

be tested by imagining our reaction to being offered a bribe to have a want. The bribe might create a want for the want, but we could not generate the basic want itself. Thus he concludes that "neither benevolence nor any other affection or desire can be directly raised by volition" (*Inquiry*, p. 139).

It might appear that these two arguments contradict a theory that Hutcheson has expounded at length elsewhere. As I will describe in Chapter 5, 'On Motivation', Hutcheson argues that the pleasures of a virtuous life are greater than any of the other pleasures of which men are capable. He is careful not to give the impression that he is arguing that one should be benevolent out of self-interest, but the question arises: Are the arguments I outlined in the previous paragraph equally as critical of Hutcheson himself as they are of the egoist? Does the apparent conflict between the above arguments and Hutcheson's own desire-of-desire theory imply that Hutcheson has contradicted himself?

Hutcheson seems to have been aware of this problem, or at least he became so by the time he wrote the corrections for the fourth edition of the '*Inquiry*'. To his consideration of the view that the promised rewards of a deity may provide a self-interested motive for wanting benevolent feelings, he adds a sentence pointing out that such a self-interested motive may be the indirect cause of benevolent desires; "The prospect of a future state, may, no doubt, have a greater indirect influence, by turning our attention to the qualities in the objects naturally apt to raise the required affection, than any other consideration" (*Inquiry*, p. 143). This suggestion that self-interest may cause benevolent desires indirectly, and that this does

not contradict the critique he gives on the direct reduction of benevolence to self-interest, is the view he takes when explaining why he argues for the pleasures of virtue. Even the example of turning our attention to qualities "apt to raise the required affection" is repeated elsewhere. This whole theory of self-interest as the indirect cause of benevolence is discussed below in Chapter 5: the point to be made here is that the theory of indirect causation does not contradict Hutcheson's critique of the direct reduction of benevolence to self-interest. This may seem like a sophistical point until one considers in detail what Hutcheson is suggesting. He is claiming that if we simply decide to have benevolent desires from considerations of self-interest, then benevolence is reducible to self-interest; this reduction he rejects. On the other hand, self-interest may draw our attention to the needs of others, and noticing these needs will automatically cause benevolent desires to arise; this does not constitute a reduction of benevolence to self-interest. The reason this avoids the reduction is that the indirect influence of self-interest on benevolence presupposes that benevolent desires are caused simply by being aware of the needs of others. Hutcheson added the following sentence to the fourth edition, making this view clear: "To raise benevolence, no more is required than calmly to consider any sensitive nature not pernicious to others" (Inquiry, p. 137). This means that benevolent desires must be inherent in human nature when one is aware of the needs of others. But that is precisely the view the egoist is arguing against. Hence the egoist cannot use the indirect method of reducing benevolence to self-interest, and Hutcheson's critique of the direct reduction does not contradict

his use of the indirect reduction in his own theory.

Not all of the egoist's reductions of benevolence to self-interest try to show that we choose to have benevolent desires because it is in our interests to do so. Some egoists have argued that we desire the happiness of others because their happiness is a means to our own happiness. Hutcheson gives three arguments against this form of reducing benevolence to self-interest.

Firstly, some egoists have suggested that the happiness of others is in our interests because we sympathize with the pleasures and pains of others. The pleasures and pains of others become in small degree our pleasures and pains, thus giving us an interest in the feelings of others. Hutcheson rejects this view. In his earlier works he considers this topic under the name of 'public sense'; in the 'System', he uses the term 'sympathy'. He has basically three arguments to show that "sympathy can never account for all kind affections, tho' it is no doubt a natural principle and a beautiful part of our constitution" (System, p. 47). He argues that the degree of benevolent feelings is not proportional to the feelings of others, so there must be factors other than sympathy involved in benevolence (System, p. 47-48). Further, men demonstrate that they wish the happiness of others even when they know they will not see that happiness; the wishes of dying men are often in this category. If they know they will not share the happiness they want for the other person, then their desire cannot be a desire for the pleasure of sympathizing with the happiness of that other person.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the desire to help others cannot be caused

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24. Essay, p. 23, System, p. 48.



by the self-interested desire to remove the uneasy feeling we have at seeing others in distress. This self-interested desire might just as well result in a desire to avoid seeing those in distress. We might look the other way rather than helping.<sup>25</sup> Thus benevolent desires are not reducible to self-interest by way of sympathy.

Hutcheson also argues that the possibility of benevolence is presupposed by moral approval.<sup>26</sup> This is not to beg the question, for first, he has already established separately that there is moral approval independent of self-interest; second, many egoists will admit moral approval, they only question whether man is ever benevolent. Hutcheson's point is quite simply that since only benevolence is morally approved, then there must be benevolence which is not reducible to self-interest if there is to be any moral approval. If the egoist is right about all actions being motivated by self-interest, then all moral approval will automatically cease when this is realized. This argument is designed to prove that one cannot accept moral approval and simultaneously deny that there is benevolence. This is why Hutcheson divides his opponents into those who deny only benevolence, and those who deny both benevolence and disinterested moral approval. It now appears that the first sort of egoist has an untenable position; he must deny either both moral approval and benevolence, or neither of them. The two stand or fall together. This explains why Hutcheson was concerned first to prove that there is moral approval; that there is benevolence follows therefrom. It should be noted that the argument by itself does not prove that there is benevolence; it only proves that

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25. Inquiry, p. 147, Essay, p. 22.

26. Inquiry, p. 146, p. 157-159, Essay, p. 21-22.

one must accept the possibility of benevolence if one is going to pass moral judgement. The argument seems to be correct if it is actual benevolence and not apparent benevolence that one morally approves of.

Hutcheson also uses an argument which is often attributed to Bishop Butler. In connexion with the suggestion that we desire the happiness of those we love (e.g. our children) because their happiness gives us pleasure, Hutcheson points out that the fact that we share their happiness presupposes that we are concerned for them. Thus the desire for their happiness cannot be a desire for our own happiness, for the possibility of our getting pleasure from their happiness presupposes the benevolent desire for their good. Perhaps Hutcheson makes the point better himself:

"But say some of our philosophers, 'The happiness of their children gives parents pleasure, and their misery gives them pain; and therefore to obtain the former, and avoid the latter, they study, from self-love, the good of their children.' ... but whence the conjunction of interest between parent and child? Do the child's sensations given pleasure or pain to the parent? Is the parent hungry, thirsty, sick, when his children are so? No; but his naturally implanted desire of their good, and aversion to their misery, makes him affected with joy or sorrow from their pleasures or pains. This desire then is antecedent to the conjunction of interest, and the cause of it, not the effect: it then must be disinterested." (Inquiry, p. 160-161).<sup>27</sup>

One must conclude from the discussion in this section that Hutcheson has presented a number of powerful arguments to prove the egoist wrong. One cannot conclude that he has proved that there are

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27. Inquiry, p. 160-161. It is questionable that Hutcheson borrowed this argument from Butler, for it is presented in the second edition of the Inquiry, (p. 155-6) as well as the fourth. There is no change between the editions in this passage.

benevolent desires in men, but he has shown that the egoist's reduction of apparent benevolence to self-interest rests on certain important confusions. When this has been done, the empirical evidence speaks for itself, and the evidence does in fact indicate that concern for others can motivate. In explicating the confusions of the egoist, Hutcheson has drawn on several of the distinctions he has made in his analysis of desires. For example, he has used the distinction between desires and accompanying sensations, and between the object of desires and the pleasures of their satisfaction. I think one must agree that once one is clear on these aspects of human desire, then many of the egoist's arguments are seen to be confused.

But how can the concerns of others become the motive for one's actions? Hutcheson considers this question in the second edition of the 'Inquiry', but he dropped this passage in the fourth edition. It is not clear why, but perhaps it was because the last line gives the impression that benevolence is a passion or instinct, and Hutcheson later became convinced that it was a desire, which is something quite distinct. In the second edition he says:

"If any enquire, 'Whence arises this love of esteem, or benevolence, to good men, or to mankind in general, if not from some nice views of self-interest? Or, how we can be mov'd to desire the happiness of others, without any view to our own?' It may be answer'd, 'That the same cause which determines us to pursue happiness for ourselves, determines us both to esteem and benevolence on their proper occasions; even the very frame of our nature, or a generous instinct, ...'"  
(Inquiry, 2nd edition, p. 142).

One comment must be added to this quotation. What does it involve, on Hutcheson's theory, for the interests of others to be the motive for our actions? Elsewhere I have discussed how desires are caused by our beliefs about possible pleasures and pains. It would now appear

that such beliefs need not be about our own pleasures and pains. Beliefs about the possible pleasures and pains of one person can cause desires in another. This is what is entailed by Hutcheson's claim that human nature contains benevolent desires.

Appendix: 'Remarks on the Fable of the Bees'

These three letters are concerned to prove that Mandeville's dictum "Private vices, public virtue" is erroneous. They give an indication of how Hutcheson could use aspects of his moral theory to refute more specific moral claims. In the first letter, Hutcheson argues that the public good does not consist in excessive luxury, and indulgence. Rather it consists in the satisfaction of basic appetites, and the maximizing of the satisfaction of the rest of our desires. It is essential if this maximizing is to function properly, that every one have a clear idea of what will bring them happiness. Failure to have correct opinions will lead us to pursue the wrong ends. "What then remains, in order to public happiness after the necessary supply of all appetites, must be to study, as much as possible, to regulate our desires of every kind, by forming just opinions of the real value of their several objects, so as to have the strength of our desires proportioned to the real value of them, and their moment to our happiness."<sup>28</sup> Hutcheson then argues that private vices tend to generate false opinions of what constitutes happiness. The vices of luxury, pride, drunkenness, etc. are all based on false opinions of happiness, and hence as such tend to disrupt the pursuit of the

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28. Remarks on 'The Fable of the Bees', p. 45.

general good. This claim that correct morality is linked with correct beliefs about what will lead to happiness, is one of the central tenets of Hutcheson's philosophy.

In the second letter, Hutcheson turns his attention to Mandeville's claim that indulging in private vices generates demand for material objects and thus encourages trade and industry which are to the good of the public. Hutcheson replies that private vice is the excessive pursuit of objects; the consumption of goods is itself not evil. He then claims that if there were no private vice, the money not thus spent would be spent anyway on the sort of goods the consumption of which is not evil. This implies that the money spent, and hence the good to trade and industry, would be the same whether or not the money was spent in a fashion which constituted private vice. In modern terms, one might restate Hutcheson's claim as saying that private vice does not increase the money supply, and therefore does not help the economy any more than the same amount of money spent in a virtuous fashion.

Hutcheson's third letter is mostly a polemic on Mandeville's arrogance, and the confusions in Mandeville's thought which make that arrogance so little justified. But towards the end, he returns to the claim that Mandeville has misunderstood the nature of private vice. He claims that Mandeville's position necessarily involves viewing virtue as the denial of self-interest - which virtue is not for Hutcheson. If virtue is viewed as the pursuit of the good of others, whether or not it conflicts with self-interest, and vice is viewed as harming others, then self-interest by itself becomes ethically neutral. This undermines Mandeville's argument, for the "Fable of the Bees"

is founded on the opinion that vice consists in the pursuit of one's own interests. Mandeville, he says, "has probably been struck with some old fanatic sermon upon self-denial in his youth, and can never get it out of his head since. It is absolutely impossible upon his scheme that God himself can make a being naturally disposed to virtue: for virtue is 'self-denial and acting against the impulse of nature.'"<sup>29</sup>

Thus two of Hutcheson's main arguments against Mandeville are that Mandeville has misunderstood the nature of both private vice and public virtue. When vice and virtue are understood on Hutcheson's model, the paradox of private vices resulting in the public good does not arise.

## iv. Benevolence, Utilitarianism and Rights

Those familiar with the history of British moral philosophy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may be wondering why I have not previously mentioned utilitarianism in this chapter on what is actually of moral value for Hutcheson. Did not Hutcheson coin the phrase which became the slogan of utilitarianism? Did he not influence Hume, and through Hume the other utilitarians, on the central tenet of the utilitarians' creed? The answer to both of these questions is probably yes, but this thesis is not about the historical influence of Hutcheson; if it were, utilitarian doctrines would have a more prominent position. Rather, this thesis is about Hutcheson's moral philosophy in itself. Given that, the absence of a discussion of utilitarianism is explained quite simply by the fact that Hutcheson was not a utilitarian. I mean this not in the historical sense that he was not a member of that school, but in the sense that he did not subscribe to the main doctrine in virtue of which a utilitarian is a utilitarian. This suggestion is, I think, sufficiently curious to warrant a short explanation of why I think it is true.

In his book on the English (sic) utilitarians, (in which, incidentally, Hutcheson is not discussed), Plamenatz proposes a definition of 'utilitarianism' which he thinks is an adequate framework for discussing utilitarianism, though he does not maintain that it precisely fits all the utilitarians. It is, I think, a sufficient definition for the present purpose of seeing why Hutcheson does not belong as a member of that school. Plamenatz lists four propositions which he thinks all the utilitarians accept in some form.

Since Hutcheson would disagree with the first of these and with the reason for the third, and since he would qualify the second, it follows that his theory differs fundamentally from utilitarianism.

The first three of Plamenatz's propositions read as follows:

"(i) Pleasure is alone good or desirable for its own sake; or else men call only those things good that are pleasant or a means to what is pleasant. (ii) The equal pleasures of any two or more men are equally good. (iii) No action is right unless it appears to the agent to be the action most likely, under the circumstances, to produce the greatest happiness; or else men do not call any action right unless it is one of a type that usually produces the greatest happiness possible under the circumstances."<sup>30</sup>

These propositions could be given various interpretations, and the utilitarians Plamenatz deals with all have slightly different views on the main tenets of their creed. I do not wish to maintain that the above interpretation has any merits other than as a device for explicating an aspect of Hutcheson's philosophy. For this purpose, it does not matter if my claim that Hutcheson is not a utilitarian is questioned by questioning my conception of the utilitarian doctrine, as long as Hutcheson's position on the central issue is clear and uncontentious.

The first of Plamenatz's propositions says that pleasure, or happiness, is what is of ultimate value: (ultimate because it is desirable for its own sake). The goodness of happiness is not qualified in this proposition by any conditions on how or why the happiness might come about. Presumably then, and this is probably an accurate account of the thinking of most utilitarians, it does not matter whether the happiness results from accidental factors, good

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30. Plamenatz, p. 2.



intentions, or even bad intentions gone wrong. Whether it is the result of natural accident, or human action, happiness is valuable in itself.

Hutcheson would not agree with this first proposition. Pleasure, regardless of its source, Hutcheson calls 'natural good'; "... nothing is advantageous or naturally good to us, but what is apt to raise pleasure mediately, or immediately." (Inquiry, p. 107). But natural good is not the only good for Hutcheson. There is also moral good, which is a quite different thing and which Hutcheson is very careful to distinguish from natural good, (cf. Inquiry, p. 106). Therefore, pleasure is not alone good or desirable for its own sake. Benevolence is also an ultimate good, and is desirable for its own sake. (Later, Hutcheson adds individual perfection as an ultimate good.)

To this suggestion that benevolence as well as pleasure is an ultimate good for Hutcheson, it might be objected that benevolence is only of value on his theory because of the pleasure it gives us through the moral sense. Hutcheson indeed maintains that we know the value of benevolence because of a type of pleasure it gives us, but that does not affect the point I am making at the moment. The important point is that for Hutcheson benevolence is an ultimate good, and that we do not desire benevolence simply as the means to the pleasures of the moral sense. Hutcheson is, of course, very emphatic in asserting that we do not desire benevolence only as a means to pleasure, for he has to maintain this to make his case against the egoists. I conclude that even though the pleasures of the moral sense are essential to our knowing the value of benevolence, benevolence is still an ultimate good for Hutcheson, and is not desired only as a

means to pleasure. The distinction between what is of value, (in Hutcheson's theory, benevolence), and how we know what is of value, (by the pleasures of the moral sense), is, I hope, a clear one, for it is presupposed by the present discussion. I will have more to say below on the difference between Hutcheson and the utilitarians on how we know what is morally of value; at the moment I will return to the question of what is in fact of value.

The second proposition requires little comment, except to note that Hutcheson would accept it only with the qualification that the relative dignity of men must be taken into account.

The third proposition says that an action is right if it is intended to promote the greatest possible happiness; presumably, 'right' here means morally right. With this, Hutcheson would agree; an action which is morally right for him is one which is motivated by calm general benevolence, and any action so motivated will obviously be "the action most likely, under the circumstances, to produce the greatest happiness".

But why are these actions right for Hutcheson, and why are they right for the utilitarians? For Hutcheson, benevolent actions just are morally right in themselves; they are not right because they are the means to a morally good end, nor can their rightness be justified in any other way.<sup>31</sup> Our moral sense approves directly of them and they are therefore immediately (not mediately) good.

The utilitarians would differ on this point. For them, proposition

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31. Cf. above, chapter 3, section iii. This claim that benevolent actions are right in themselves without reference to any other end, must not be confused with the assertion that we know that benevolence is good by means of the moral sense.

iii is a corollary of propositions i and ii. Actions intended to enhance the greatest happiness are right because happiness is alone of ultimate value and it is irrelevant whose happiness it is. For the utilitarians, the pursuit of general happiness is of moral value because happiness is of value; for Hutcheson, the pursuit of general happiness is of moral value without justification because the moral sense approves of benevolence. The difference between Hutcheson and the utilitarians on this point revolves around the distinction between general happiness and the pursuit of general happiness. For Hutcheson, 'general benevolence' means the pursuit of general happiness, and it is this pursuit which is of general value. The utilitarians, on the other hand, only value this pursuit because they value the goal; that is, they value general happiness first, and value the pursuit of general happiness as a means of obtaining that goal. Here, and in many places in this theory, it must be remembered that for Hutcheson benevolence is a desire which may motivate action, but it is not the object or goal of such actions. General happiness is a state of affairs; benevolence is the desire to bring about that state of affairs. Hutcheson places ultimate value on benevolence, the utilitarians place ultimate value on general happiness.

Thus we find that Hutcheson would have disagreed with the first of Plamenatz's propositions, qualified the second, and disagreed with the reason for the third. For the utilitarians, happiness is of ultimate value, and the rest of their doctrine is based on that principle. For Hutcheson, benevolence is of ultimate value. Benevolence is quite different from happiness.

So far, I have been discussing the differences between what is

held to be of ultimate value by Hutcheson and the utilitarians. But Hutcheson also differs from the utilitarians in his theory of how we know what is of value. The utilitarians rely on the single insight that general happiness is the ultimate good; the rest of their doctrines are the consequences of this principle, deduced from it in a purely rational fashion. Hutcheson, on the other hand, maintains that we have a sense which reacts to different actions separately, and which tells us in each case whether the action is right or not. The general contention that benevolence is found by the moral sense to be good, is not a basic principle from which he deduces the rest of his theory, but rather is an empirical observation about the way in which the moral sense does in fact tend to react. Not only are moral values different for Hutcheson and the utilitarians, but we arrive at our knowledge of values in a different fashion.

If Hutcheson is not a utilitarian, why does he discuss the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers? The answer to this question lies in the fact that general benevolence has a necessary relationship with general happiness; this is quite obvious since general benevolence is the desire for the happiness (or natural good) of people in general. But though this means that the notion of general happiness is necessarily a concern of Hutcheson's, it does not mean that the notion has the same primacy for him as it does for the utilitarians. As I mentioned when discussing Plamenatz's third proposition, the utilitarians value benevolence, (or, in some cases, the pursuit of general happiness for whatever motive), because they value general happiness. For Hutcheson, it is the other way around; he must consider happiness because he values benevolence.

This difference between Hutcheson and the utilitarians has two major implications; it affects the relationship between the morality and the consequences of actions, and it affects the discussion of perfection in Hutcheson's later philosophy.

For the utilitarians, since the value of the pursuit of general happiness derives from the value of happiness, the consequences of actions tend to be more important for moral judgements than the motive. The important question for them is: Does the action result in happiness? I say 'tends to' because the matter is complicated by there being many versions of utilitarianism, and it is not possible to do justice to them all. However, I would suggest that for Bentham at least, the consequences of actions are paramount, and the motive of lesser concern.

Hutcheson's position on the relative weight, in moral considerations, of the motives and the consequences of actions follows from his claim that benevolence is the ultimate moral value. For him, when appraising the moral value of an action already done, one considers only the motive; that is, one considers only whether the motive was benevolence or not. The actual consequences are not important, except as they may indicate the presence or degree of benevolence. In this respect, the calculations Hutcheson proposes in the 'Inquiry' (2nd edition, p. 183-188) are interesting. These are not utilitarian calculations; their purpose is not to facilitate the process of calculating the happiness which will result from an action. Rather, the formulas are designed to aid the calculation of the degree of benevolence the action displays.<sup>32</sup> It is the intention or motive, not the consequences, which is relevant to the virtue of actions. This, however, applies

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32. Cf. Albee, p. 61.

only when estimating the moral worth of actions already done. In deciding which actions one ought to do, one has to consider the results. This is because one cannot fulfil a desire without considering which actions will achieve the desired end. Hence, one cannot fulfil benevolent desires without considering which possible action results in the greatest possible happiness. It is in this context that Hutcheson uses the famous formula "the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers". The paragraph in which this phrase occurs has the marginal title, "Qualities determining our Election", and begins thus: "In comparing the moral qualities of actions, in order to regulate our election among various actions propos'd..." (Inquiry, p. 180). It is in the context of election of actions, not in judging them, that the greatest happiness principle is applicable. Hutcheson makes this point explicit in the 'System':

"An action is called materially good when in fact it tends to the interest of the system, as far as we can judge of its tendency; or to the good of some part consistent with that of the system, whatever were the affections of the agent. An action is formally good, when it flowed from good affections in a just proportion. A good man deliberating which of several actions proposed he shall chuse, regards and compares the material goodness of them, and then is determined by his moral sense invariably preferring that which appears most conducive to the happiness and virtue of mankind. But in judging of his past actions he considers chiefly the affections they flowed from abstracting from their effects." (System, p. 252-253.)

When electing to do an action, Hutcheson's theory implies that one ought also to consider one's motives carefully to make sure one is acting from genuine benevolence and not disguised self-interest. Hutcheson does not develop this line of thought, probably because he thought that we have direct access to information about our own desires,

and that it would be immediately apparent to us which of these are benevolent and which are not.

It is in the context of the utilitarian considerations relevant when choosing an action, that Hutcheson discusses the notion of rights. He thinks that it is part of the philosopher's business to establish the universal rules or maxims which will lead to the greatest general happiness:

"Then he (the moral philosopher) is to inquire, by reflection upon human affairs, what course of action does most effectually promote the universal good, what universal rules or maxims are to be observ'd, and in what circumstances the reason of them alters, so as to admit exceptions; ..." (Inquiry, p. 271)

The use of the phrase "universal rules or maxims" in this quotation suggests that Hutcheson, in those contexts in which he is a utilitarian, is a rule-utilitarian. However, considering his moral theory as a whole, Hutcheson is ambiguous as to whether he advocates rule- or act-utilitarianism, (that is, in those limited contexts in which he seems to espouse utilitarianism; this qualification is assumed throughout the present discussion). But when he discusses rights, he always introduces the notion of universal rules, laws or maxims, and assumes that utilitarian considerations should refer to rules, not individual acts. D.D. Raphael, in a paper entitled "Utilitarianism and Rights"<sup>33</sup>, argues that this introduction of the notion of laws into the discussion of utilitarianism arose because of the historical fact that the notion of rights in the general philosophical sense, was derived from the legal notion of rights. When Hutcheson, Hume, and the later utilitarians, discussed rights from the utilitarian standpoint, the legal origins of the notion led them to discuss the utility of laws or rules, not

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33. Raphael, "Utilitarianism and Rights", *passim*.

individual actions. Raphael attributes the rise of the notion of rule-utilitarianism to the discussion of rights, and related topics, such as Hume's discussion of justice.

Hutcheson's definition of rights, then, is based on the utilitarian criterion applied to universal maxims or laws. As given in the 'Inquiry' it reads thus:

"Whenever it appears to us, that a faculty of doing, demanding, or possessing any thing, universally allow'd in certain circumstances, would in the whole tend to the general good, we say, that one in such circumstances has a right to do, possess, or demand that thing." (Inquiry, p. 277)

Hutcheson then goes on to draw a distinction between perfect and imperfect rights. Both these terms he defines in utilitarian terms as well. Perfect rights

"are of such necessity to the publick good, that the universal violation of them would make human life intolerable; and it actually makes those miserable, whose rights are violated." (Inquiry, p. 278; see also System, p. 257.)

Imperfect rights

"are such as, when universally violated, would not necessarily make men miserable. These rights tend to the improvement and increase of positive good in any society, but are not absolutely necessary to prevent universal misery." (Inquiry, 279; see also System, p. 258.)

Hutcheson also appeals to the principle of utility to establish whether the use of violence is justified in defence of these rights. Violence is justified in the case of perfect rights because such violence

"cannot in any particular case be more detrimental to the publick, than the violation of them (perfect rights) with impunity." (Inquiry, p. 278)



On the other hand, violence is not justified in the case of imperfect rights because

"a violent prosecution of such rights would generally occasion greater evil than the violation of them."  
(Inquiry, p. 279)

In this account of the various aspects of rights, Hutcheson has been appealing to the utilitarian principle of pursuing the greatest general good. Does this conflict with my claim that Hutcheson is not a utilitarian? Hutcheson answers this question, for he immediately proceeds to relate rights to the degree of benevolence (or the lack of it) which their violation indicates in a person who violates them.

"The violation of imperfect rights only argues a man to have such weak benevolence, as not to study advancing the positive good of others, when in the least opposition to his own: but the violation of perfect rights argues the injurious person to be positively evil or cruel; or at least so immoderately selfish, as to be indifferent about the positive misery and ruin of others, when he imagines he can find his interest in it." (Inquiry, p. 280)

Thus in the case of the violation of rights, as in morality in general, when one judges the actions of others, one considers the degree of benevolence the actions display. When deciding what the rights of people are, one uses the criterion of the greatest general good; this is because rights are general rules or laws which govern the election of actions. But when judging actions already done, even in the case of rights, one must look at the benevolence or lack of it in the agent, not at the good of society. This is why when discussing the violation of rights in the above quotation Hutcheson makes central the concept of benevolence, not the principle of utility.

Although there is a sense in which Hutcheson is entitled to stipulate any definition of 'rights' he wants, so long as he is

consistent, it must be pointed out that his definition is not consistent with certain ideas usually included in the notion of rights. Without attempting a detailed analysis of the concept of rights, it is nevertheless worth noting that, in the eighteenth century at least, it was common to view rights as giving the individual a claim on society which would give him some guarantee against interference in a specific area. If it was asserted, for example, that a man had a right to the product of his labour, then it was being asserted that society ought not to interfere with the individual in this respect; that is, that he should enjoy exclusive, or near exclusive, use of such products. (This is not to suggest that this is all that was being asserted.) Now it is not at all clear that Hutcheson's utilitarian definition of rights includes this notion that the individual has certain fundamental claims on society. This problem arises with all utilitarian definitions of rights and related terms, a fact which is most apparent in John Stuart Mill's defence of individual liberty. In his essay "On Liberty", Mill suggests that he is going to defend individual liberty on utilitarian grounds,<sup>34</sup> but it is not obvious that this intention is borne out in the body of the essay. Indeed, the question of whether he is able to defend liberty on utilitarian grounds is an often discussed question; the answer is usually negative.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Mill, p. 74.

35. See, for example: Watkins, p. 165-6; Levi, p. 19; or (on justice and utility) Raphael, "Rights and Utilitarianism", passim. I think it obvious from my definition of how philosophers of the eighteenth century were wont to use the term 'right', why Mill's notion of liberty is closely related to it; (both give the individual claims to non-interference from society). However, for a discussion of the relation of Mill's notion of liberty with the notion of rights, see Rees, passim.

Examination of Hutcheson's definitions of 'rights' and of 'perfect rights' allows us to see how the problem will arise for him, and will perhaps make clear why he failed to notice the problem. According to Hutcheson, a person has a right if allowing that right universally is to the good. He then defines perfect and imperfect rights in terms of the results of allowing the universal violation of the right; this much, I think, is clear from his definitions as I quoted them above. What Hutcheson has not done in these definitions is to justify his use of the term 'universal'. The definitions taken together suggest that he thinks these rights will be either universally defended by society, or their violation universally permitted. He does not discuss the case where the right is partially defended and partially violated with impunity. He then argues in favour of the defence by society of perfect rights, and the non-enforcement of imperfect rights. But what if allowing the partial violation of perfect rights (as Hutcheson uses the term) would lead to greater general happiness than maintaining the right universally? If he adheres both to his utilitarian principles and to his definition of rights, in such a case Hutcheson would have to say that everyone had a right to a thing, (since allowing it universally would be to the general good) but that selected violation of the right ought to be allowed since this would lead to an even greater good. A person might have a right according to Hutcheson's definition, and at the same time society would have a moral claim to violating that right under certain circumstances. Surely, this is peculiar, if not contradictory. I think Hutcheson has ignored this possibility because, no doubt for historical reasons having to do with the then contemporary discussion of a state of nature, he views the

alternative to universal enforcement of a right as being no social enforcement of it at all; either there is total enforcement or there is a state of nature, or natural liberty.<sup>36</sup> He has not considered the case where society enforces a right partially but allows its violation in certain cases. If in such a case the partial violation of the right was to the greatest general good, there would be a conflict between utilitarianism and the individual's claims on society which are normally acknowledged when we say a person has a right. In a word, is it acceptable to sacrifice the rights of a few individuals to the greater good of the society as a whole? If one defines rights on a utilitarian criterion, the answer would seem to be yes, because there is no criterion other than the greatest good to which one can appeal. But if rights are defined separately, and are viewed as fundamental, as they often are, then the answer would seem to be no. Thus there seems to be great violence done to the normal notion of rights by trying to give a utilitarian-based definition of them.

It might be objected to my argument that Hutcheson could have defined rights not as that which, if universally allowed, would tend to the public good, but rather as that which, if violated in any individual's case, would lead to a diminution of the general good. This is a utilitarian-based definition which does not allow an individual's rights to be violated for the sake of the general good, for it makes that logically impossible. If a person can be sacrificed to the general good, then on this definition he has no right not to

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36. Cf. Inquiry, p. 278. The text of the fourth edition reads "state of nature", but in the corrections to the fourth edition which arrived too late for inclusion in the text but which the printer includes at the end of the book, Hutcheson requests that this be changed to "natural liberty"; Inquiry, p. 311.

be sacrificed. This definition may solve the problem of making individual rights consistent with the principle of utility, but it suffers from the problem that no such rights exist. It is doubtful whether there are any candidates for rights which will never give rise to a single instance in which violating that right would be to the general good. Consider the right to life, (which Hutcheson considers a perfect right, and which surely must be basic if any right is); it is trivially easy to think of a case where violation of this right in an individual's case is to the general good.

Hutcheson's failure to see the conflict between utility and rights may, as I have suggested, derive from his comparing universal enforcement with universally permitted violation, (that is, with universal non-enforcement, or a state of nature). What he has not considered is partial enforcement. Perhaps the reason for this is that he seems to think that rights are liable to be violated by individuals, not by society. But in fact, when rights are partially enforced and partially violated, the rights are as likely as not to be violated by society rather than individuals. By the violation of an individual's rights by society, I mean the use of laws or institutions by a large group in a society to impose a system of laws or a social structure on that society, in which the wants of the dominant group are pursued at the expense of the rights of other individuals. Slavery is an obvious example of this. It is the case of a majority advancing its interests at the expense of a minority that is most likely to give rise to a conflict of rights with utility.

Let me end this section by returning from this discussion of rights to the discussion of the role of the utilitarian principle

in Hutcheson's moral philosophy. Earlier I argued that Hutcheson was not really a utilitarian because he gave primacy to benevolence over utility as the ultimate moral good. This led him to emphasize the motives for actions more than their results, while the utilitarians tended to be more concerned with the results of actions. This difference of emphasis is related to the change Hutcheson made in his later philosophy whereby the pursuit of individual perfection also becomes a moral good. On the question of the pursuit of perfection, Plamenatz presents forcibly the utilitarian attitude; "The utilitarians share with Hobbes a complete indifference to the notion of self-improvement as a thing desirable for its own sake."<sup>37</sup> Hutcheson, on the other hand, precisely because he locates the value of actions in the motive from which they are done, came to view the pursuit of virtue as consisting in the cultivation of certain motives (or desires). Hence he came to value striving for self-improvement, or personal perfection.<sup>38</sup>

I hope that I have established why Hutcheson ought not to be considered a utilitarian despite the fact that aspects of his writings bear some similarity with utilitarian ideas. To summarize, the only ultimate value for the utilitarians is human happiness. For Hutcheson, happiness, or natural good, is of value, but for him the ultimate moral value lies in benevolence. This difference of valuing happiness or benevolence leads to a different emphasis on the consequences or

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37. Plamenatz, p. 11. He excepts John Stuart Mill.

38. This development in Hutcheson's thought is discussed below in chapter 7.

on the motives of actions. Emphasizing the motives of actions leads Hutcheson, in his later writings to locate virtue in the cultivation of one's personality, a notion which the utilitarians did not accept.

## 5. The Problem of Motivation

### i. The Problem

In the previous three chapters I have given outlines of Hutcheson's theories of human nature, of the moral sense, and of benevolence. The question now arises of whether these theories are compatible with one another. Much doubt has been expressed in this matter concerning one point; namely, the relation between the moral sense, benevolence, and Hutcheson's theory of motivation. The problem arises because it is difficult to see how the moral sense, and hence moral judgements and moral knowledge, can influence us towards being virtuous. One's normal moral intuitions suggest that there is a problem with any ethical theory in which an agent's knowledge of right and wrong does not or cannot influence the agent's actions. In Hutcheson's theory, the most noticeable point in this regard is that the moral sense is a sense, and sensations cannot motivate actions. But the problem goes deeper than that, for not only can the moral sense as a sense not motivate; it would appear difficult for any desire which the moral sense might generate (for example, the desire to be virtuous), to motivate virtuous behaviour. The moral sense approves or disapproves of actions according to how strong a benevolent desire is the motivating force behind the action. Hence benevolent desires are the motive for all virtuous action. But if this is true, then any act motivated by a desire to do one's duty, or to be virtuous, or to obtain the approval of one's own or another's moral sense, cannot be a virtuous act, for none of these motives is a type of benevolence. One can only conclude that the moral sense cannot influence us towards



moral behaviour. I wish to try to establish in this chapter that Hutcheson has attempted to answer this problem.

The problem is more than a *prima facie* one. In his book, Motivation and the Moral Sense in Francis Hutcheson's Ethical Theory, Jensen's central claim is that Hutcheson does not and cannot solve this problem. Jensen says, for example: "Hutcheson simply fails to give a clear and consistent account of how the moral sense and justifying reasons motivate."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he says there are "characteristics of Hutcheson's doctrine of obligation and motivation which taken together, render it wholly untenable."<sup>2</sup> I do not agree with these conclusions. I think Jensen has missed Hutcheson's theory of how the moral sense influences our actions, and how it can lead a person to be more virtuous. This theory I will now consider.

The problem of how the moral sense can influence actions arises from a number of aspects of Hutcheson's theories taken together. I have mentioned these points in the previous chapters, but gathering them together here will help to establish both the problem and the possible solution:

- a. All human behaviour is motivated by passions or desires. In the case of conflicting desires, the strongest one wins. This is true even if the conflicting desires are benevolence and self-interest. "When the publick desires are opposite to the private, or seem to be so, that kind prevails which is stronger or more intense." (Essay, p. 34).
- b. All virtuous actions are motivated by benevolence. Or, to put the

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1. Jensen, p. 85-86.

2. Jensen, p. 97.

same point another way, the moral sense approves of all actions, and only those actions, which are motivated by benevolent affections. (In his later writings, Hutcheson changed his opinion on this point; cf. below, chapter 7.)

- c. The moral sense is a sense, not a desire, and hence cannot motivate actions directly. Neither can moral judgements, nor justifying reasons, founded on the moral sense, motivate directly.
- d. No desire or passion can be raised at will. Thus he explicitly says: "neither benevolence nor any other affection or desire can be directly raised by volition." (Inquiry, p. 139, Also Essay, p. 17.)

From these claims it logically follows:

- 1. that we cannot create or increase our benevolent desires at will, and hence that we cannot increase our virtuous actions at will.
- 2. that the moral sense, being a sense, cannot directly motivate action, either virtuous or otherwise.
- 3. that any desire which the moral sense gives rise to cannot motivate virtuous action, since only benevolence can motivate virtuous action and the moral sense does not generate the desire of benevolence.
- 4. and that therefore, the moral sense cannot motivate us to do virtuous actions, either directly or by giving rise to such desires as a desire for virtue, desire to do one's duty, etc.

This problem, and Hutcheson's way around it, are of great significance, partly because Hutcheson in his discussion of it develops a theory on a very important aspect of human morality, and partly because it is a problem which will occur in some form or other in any

moral theory which locates virtue and vice in the motive for actions. The first of these points I will discuss in the second part of this chapter, the second requires comment here.

It is apparent from my statement of the problem above, that how moral knowledge can motivate virtuous actions is a problem for Hutcheson because he locates virtue in a specific type of motive for actions, namely benevolence, and then locates moral knowledge in another faculty of the mind, the moral sense. It is immediately apparent that any desire which arises because of the moral sense, is not benevolence, and hence cannot motivate virtuous action. Thus the desire for virtue cannot motivate virtuous action. I think it obvious from this formulation of the problem that the paradox will arise even if the criterion for virtuous action is some motive other than benevolence, and even if moral knowledge arises in a fashion other than a moral sense. The core of the problem is located in the identification of virtue with a particular motive, which seems then to exclude a virtuous action being done from a desire for virtue.

It might be suggested that a theory which located virtue in performing acts from a sense of duty or from a desire for virtue would avoid this problem, even though it locates the virtue of actions in the type of motive from which the action was performed. In this case knowledge of duty or virtue can influence virtuous actions because virtuous actions are done from a desire to do what is known to be virtuous or to be one's duty. But this theory is afflicted with a form of the problem which was discussed by Hume at length. Hutcheson does not discuss this version of the problem because it supposes that the fundamental motive for virtuous actions is the desire to do what

is virtuous, whereas Hutcheson assumes that the fundamental motive for virtuous actions is benevolence. But the problem is worth noting anyway. If virtuous actions are those motivated by a desire to be virtuous, then knowing that an action is virtuous is knowing that it is done from the desire to be virtuous. But knowing what is virtuous cannot generate a desire to be virtuous, for that would be a desire to act from the desire itself. It would be a desire whose only object was to motivate action. Obviously, that is circular. This version of the problem can be put another way; if an action is done from a motive of being virtuous, then this presupposes some criterion of virtue independent of the desire for virtue, and hence virtue cannot be located in the desire for virtue without circularity. This problem will not arise if virtue is located in some aspect of the action, and not in the motive behind the action.

Hume was acutely aware of the fact that if the goodness of an act is dependent on the nature of the desire which motivates it, then knowledge of morality cannot provide the motive for virtuous acts. In the "Treatise" he says that "no action can be virtuous or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality."<sup>3</sup> For Hume, the problem of there being a desire to do an action because it is virtuous arises in two forms. Firstly, it arises in the case of natural virtues when the virtuous desire normally inherent in human nature is missing on a particular occasion, and the desire to do virtuous actions must take over. Secondly, it arises in the case of artificial virtues because

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3. Hume, Treatise, p. 479.

in the case of artificial virtues there never is an inherent virtuous desire to do the action; the desire to do the action because it is virtuous is the only non-self-interested desire involved. In the case of natural virtues, it is interesting to note that Hume solved the problem of how moral beliefs and the desire to do what is virtuous can lead to actions in a manner quite different from Hutcheson's. On the same page of the "Treatise", as the above quotation, Hume goes on to say: "When any virtuous motive or principle is common in human nature, a person, who feels his heart devoid of that motive, may hate himself upon that account, and may perform the action without the motive, from a certain sense of duty, in order to acquire by practice, that virtuous principle, or at least, to disguise to himself, as much as possible, his want of it."<sup>4</sup> The former of these two motives, to acquire it by practice, is one which seems not to have occurred to Hutcheson, although in his later writings he introduced the idea that the desire for perfection could lead one to try to acquire virtuous habits (e.g. Introduction, p. 96). The second of Hume's suggestions, "to disguise to himself" the want of the desire, has rather interesting implications for the notion of self-deception. But for Hutcheson, doing benevolent acts because one is afraid of the self-disapproval of the moral sense, may possibly motivate action, but could not motivate virtuous action, for the motive is not benevolence itself. Hume's general point is that virtuous motives must be motives which are generally common in mankind, but that in particular cases, if these motives are absent on that occasion, then the desire for virtue may take over. He is claiming that this desire for virtue presupposes that

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4. Hume, Treatise, p. 479.

at least sometimes the virtuous desire is the motive for actions. There is nothing in Hutcheson's theory which would exclude this approach, except the fact that in such a case, the acts done from the desire to do virtuous acts would not be virtuous. For Hutcheson, Hume's theory would be acceptable as an explanation of how moral knowledge can motivate actions, but not of how moral knowledge can motivate virtuous actions.

These two suggestions of Hume's, (of trying to acquire virtuous motives by habit, and of deceiving oneself into thinking one has such motives), are concerned with the situation in which the virtuous motive is normally inherent in our nature, but happens to be absent in particular instances. Virtuous motives which are inherent in our nature, such as loving our children, Hume calls 'natural virtues.' But the largest part of the 'Treatise's' Book III, "Of Morals", is devoted to the artificial virtues. These are virtues, such as promise keeping, in which the motive for the virtuous act seems to presuppose the institution in society that such acts are virtuous. For example, if one keeps promises from a desire to be virtuous by being honest, this motive presupposes that keeping one's promises is virtuous. But if, as Hume assumes, the virtue of an act depends on the motive from which it is done, then in the case of promise keeping one encounters the paradox which Hume has so carefully outlined; to wit, that the only motive for keeping promises depends on the knowledge of its being virtuous, and its being virtuous depends on its being done from such knowledge - which is circular. Hume believed that there are such artificial virtues, and he explained at length how he thought they are possible. But we need not consider his thoughts on this topic, for

the point in mentioning these artificial virtues is to show why this particular problem does not arise for Hutcheson. It will be remembered that for Hume, natural virtues are those virtuous motives which are inherent in human nature, and that the artificial virtues depend on social conventions and are not so inherent. But if this is the case, then all virtues are for Hutcheson natural; he acknowledges no virtues that are artificial in Hume's sense. This is obvious if one remembers that the only virtuous motive that Hutcheson recognizes is benevolence, and that benevolence is inherent in our nature. Although the form of particular acts of benevolence might be determined culturally, the motive itself is natural and does not depend on social convention. From this it follows that Hume's version of the problem I am dealing with, at least as it arises in the case of the artificial virtues, is different from Hutcheson's. Hume faces the problem of there being (artificial) virtues for which there seem to be no motive at all (except self-interest) inherent in human nature. Hutcheson does not have this problem, for benevolence is inherent in human nature, and all virtuous actions are motivated by benevolence, (at least in his early writings). It is a different problem than this that is common to Hume and Hutcheson; namely, the problem of how a desire to do virtuous actions can motivate if all virtuous actions must be motivated by some other desire, such as benevolence.

This may explain the curious remarks Hume makes in a letter to Hutcheson. Hume had sent Hutcheson the manuscript of the third book of the "Treatise"; Hutcheson's reply is not extant, but Hume's return letter is. In a post script to this letter Hume says:

"... if there be no other goods but virtue, 'tis impossible there can be any virtue; because the mind would want all motives to begin its actions upon: and 'tis on the goodness or badness of the motives that the virtue of the action depends. This proves, that to every virtuous action there must be a motive or impelling passion distinct from the virtue, & that virtue can never be the sole motive to any action. You do not assent to this; tho' I think there is no proposition more certain or important."<sup>5</sup>

This suggestion that Hutcheson did not agree that knowledge of the virtue of an action could not be the motive to a virtuous action is curious in that this point is entailed by his theory, and in general Hutcheson seems aware of the point. In the absence of Hutcheson's reply one can only speculate, but it should be noted that Hutcheson thought that knowledge of virtue could influence our action in an indirect fashion as explained in the next section of this chapter, but that such knowledge could not directly motivate action. This manoeuvre would not have been acceptable to Hume because it presupposes that the actual virtuous motive, benevolence, is inherent in human nature, and so does not solve Hume's problem of the artificial virtues. But this it was not meant to do; Hutcheson would have accepted that his theory was only applicable to natural virtues in Hume's sense. On Hutcheson's theory, all virtues are natural in this sense, since all virtuous actions are for him motivated by benevolence which is inherent in human nature. It should also be added that this exchange of letters took place in 1739; this was about the time that Hutcheson was writing the 'System' and his opinion on this point seems to have changed from his earlier writings. In the 'System', Hutcheson increases the function of the moral sense; it no longer approves only

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5. Grieg, vol. I, p. 35.



of benevolence as it does in his earlier writings, but also approves of the desire to be virtuous:

"Another disposition inseparable from this (i.e. calm general benevolence) in men, and probably in all beings who are capable of such extensive affection, is the relish or approbation of this affection, and a naturally consequent desire of this moral excellence, and an esteem and good will of an higher kind to all in whom it is found. This love of moral excellence is also an high object of approbation, when we find it in ourselves by reflection, or observe it in another. It is a pretty different affection from benevolence or the desire of communicating happiness; and is as it were in another order of affection;... (System, p. 69-70).

It must be added to this quote, however, that the pursuit of virtue as envisaged in the 'System', though now approved of by the moral sense, is still the pursuit of internal mental characteristics in the fashion which I will describe in the rest of this chapter, and is not directly the motive for external actions.

## ii. Hutcheson's Theory of Moral Motivation

Having made clear, I hope, the problem, I would like to reiterate an aspect of the interrelations between the moral sense, benevolence, and motivation which I have discussed in the previous chapters. I pointed out in chapter 4, section i, that in the first version of Hutcheson's theory (i.e. in the 'Inquiry') the moral sense is a kind of affection of love, or esteem, which one feels towards those who are benevolent. This love could then cause us to feel benevolence towards the esteemed person in return. If this were the case, the moral sense could give rise to, in the sense of causing, benevolent desires which could then motivate actions. Thus the moral sense

under this theory could generate, or cause, virtuous action in a not very indirect fashion. But this version of the theory only partially avoids the problem I am dealing with in this chapter. In the 'Inquiry', the moral sense can only generate benevolence if benevolent actions are perceived in others; it would also seem to suggest that the benevolence thus generated is only directed to those whom we see as being benevolent, but that is a debatable point both as an interpretation of Hutcheson and as a fact of human nature. This contention that the moral sense can only create benevolent desires if other people are actually perceived as being benevolent, still leaves us with the problem of how moral judgements about possible actions can cause us to feel benevolent. If a possible action of our own is contemplated, the moral sense will react with pleasure or pain as appropriate, but in this case there is no agent but ourselves to esteem. Thus if this affection generates benevolence towards the agent conceived of as doing the act, it can only generate benevolence towards ourselves, which is impossible. One can only conclude that under the first version of the theory, the moral sense can generate benevolence, and hence virtuous action, if the moral sense is reacting to the virtuous actions of others; it cannot generate benevolence if it is only reacting to the possibility of an action of our own. Thus the abstract realization that an action is good cannot cause a benevolent desire towards doing that action. In other words, it is only the perception of virtue in the world that can cause us to be virtuous; the possibility of being virtuous cannot generate a virtuous desire. The first version, of course, allows that we may pursue apparently virtuous action from other motives, such as a desire for honour, but Hutcheson is explicit

that actions thus performed are motivated by self-interest and are not virtuous.

As I have explained in chapter 4, section ii, above, the second version of Hutcheson's theory of benevolence does not interpret the moral sense as an affection or feeling of love towards others, but as a sense which perceives moral goodness. On this version of the moral sense theory, it is harder to see how the moral sense can motivate virtuous action, and Hutcheson develops a complex theory to explain the point. The rest of this chapter deals with the problem of motivation in the later version of the moral sense theory.

In order to establish how the moral sense can influence our behaviour, we must recall that for Hutcheson there are two possible causes of motivation in men: passions and desires. I have remarked that on the first version of Hutcheson's theory, the moral sense gives rise to an affection of benevolence which in some ways resembles a passion. But in his later theory, the suggestion that the moral sense might generate passions is unacceptable, for on this theory, the most virtuous actions are motivated by calm general benevolence, (which is a desire, not a passion). Therefore, if the moral sense is to influence virtuous actions, it must raise desires, not only passions. Let us examine the possible desires that the moral sense might create. These are four in number; namely, a desire for the pleasure of self-approbation, a desire for the good of others caused by anticipation of the pleasures of self-approbation, a desire to be motivated by benevolence, and a desire to have benevolent desires. Let us consider these in turn.

1. For Hutcheson, desires are caused by beliefs about the possibility

of future pleasures or pains. Since the contemplation of moral acts gives us pleasure because of the moral sense, there is no question that the possibility of obtaining the pleasures of self-approbation can cause a desire for that pleasure. But this leads to a logical paradox; to wit, if I do an act out of the desire for self-approbation, then I have not done it from benevolence, my moral sense will not approve, and there will be no pleasure. Thus the desire for self-approbation cannot motivate, for in doing so it removes the possibility of obtaining its own object.

2. Earlier in this thesis,<sup>6</sup> it was pointed out that Hutcheson distinguishes between the object of a desire, the pleasure accompanying the satisfaction of a desire, and the belief about possible pleasures which causes the desire. These distinctions raise the possibility that the possible pleasure of self-approbation raises a desire whose object is not this pleasure, but rather the good of others. In this case, one could be motivated by a desire to help others, but this would be caused by anticipating the pleasures provided by the moral sense. (This is distinct from the first case, for that was a desire directly for the pleasures of the moral sense.) The problem with a desire caused by the moral sense in this way is that it is not really a desire for the good of others, but rather a desire for us to act for their benefit.

"The prospect of rewards from the deity, of future pleasures from the self-approbation of our moral sense, or of any pleasure attending an affection itself, are only motives to us to desire or wish to have the affection of benevolence in our hearts; and consequently, if our volition could raise

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6. Cf. above, chapter 2, sec. ii.

affections in us, these motives would make us will or choose to raise benevolent affections: But these prospects cannot be motives to us from self-love, to desire the happiness of others; for, from self-love we only desire what we apprehend to be the means of private good. Now the having those affections is the means of obtaining these private goods, and not the actual happiness of others; for the pleasure of self-approbation, and divine rewards, are not obtained or lost according as others are happy or miserable, but according to the goodness of our affections." (Inquiry, p. 143, footnote.)

It is not the good of others which gains us the pleasures of self-approbation, but rather the act of promoting that good. The good of others becomes a means to the satisfaction of what is basically a self-interested desire. Thus this desire is not benevolence, and the moral sense cannot approve it, and one has a repetition of the paradox encountered under the first case.

Hutcheson, however, does not seem to be aware of the logical problem involved in these two possible desires. He argues against desires caused by, or for, the pleasures of self-approbation motivating virtuous actions, but he does not use the logical problem this generates to do so. First it should be noted that Hutcheson's language makes it unclear whether he is arguing against the first or second of the possibilities I have just considered, but I do not think that this ambiguity is very significant because he probably would have said the same thing against both cases if he had distinguished them. His theory suggests that it should be the second one he would have to refute.

Hutcheson's rejection of the possibility that the desire for self-approbation can be the motive for virtuous actions, does not use the logical paradox, for he admits that such a desire can and in fact

does motivate action: "The prospect of the pleasure of self-approbation is indeed often a motive to choose one action rather than another; ..." (Illustrations, p. 140, cf. also, Illustrations, p. 174). But he denies that actions done from such a motive are virtuous actions. That they are not virtuous follows from the fact that they are not motivated by benevolence and hence that the moral sense would not approve them. Hutcheson is quite explicit that although such desires can motivate, such motivation is from self-interest and hence not virtuous (cf. *ibid.* and *Inquiry*, p. 140 ff.).

Perhaps it should be said in Hutcheson's favour that such desires are not illogical unless one sees the paradox involved. The desire for self-approbation is caused by a belief about the possible pleasures of the moral sense, not by those pleasures themselves. That the pleasures will not in fact result if the motive for the action is understood, does not necessarily prevent one from believing before hand that they will result. Such beliefs will only be destroyed by the paradox if one sees the paradox in advance. And since we do not all have the logical acumen of David Hume, there is the distinct possibility that some of us will have these beliefs and be motivated by the resulting desire. But this, of course, does not affect Hutcheson's point that actions so motivated are not virtuous.

3. The third possibility is that the moral sense generates a desire to do virtuous acts; that is, it generates a desire to do actions motivated by benevolence. These actions would be approved by the moral sense, since they are motivated by benevolence. But this possibility runs into the problem that it involves a desire not for an event or object, but a desire that a certain motive, benevolence, will result in action. Is such a desire possible on Hutcheson's

theory of human nature? And further, how can such a desire motivate or influence actions? The first and rather obvious point is that a desire to be motivated by benevolence presupposes that one has benevolent desires. Since for Hutcheson, desires cannot be created by acts of volition, these benevolent desires must be present in our natures before the desire that they should motivate arises. This, of course, does not pose any problem for Hutcheson, for he has argued at length to establish that benevolent desires are inherent in human nature. So the question becomes, how can a desire to act from a motive we already have influence our behaviour? And what is the point of this other desire if we already have the primary desire, and all desires can motivate?

The answers to these questions lie in Hutcheson's theory of which desires motivate when we have competing desires which are incompatible. In such a case the strongest desire overcomes the other desires and results in action.<sup>7</sup> This means that if, and only if, there is a desire stronger than and competing with our benevolent desires, will those benevolent desires not motivate actions. The desires which obviously pose such competition to benevolence are the various self-interested desires. Thus the perplexing desire which we are discussing in this section, the desire that benevolence should motivate, becomes a desire to see that benevolence is stronger than self-interest. It is a desire to remove the competition to benevolence. There are several ways in which this can be done, all of them relying on the fact that the strength of a desire depends on the degree of pleasure

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7. For a discussion of the strength of desires, see above, chapter 2, sec. ii.

which is believed will result from the action. One can try to increase the force of one's benevolent desires by concentrating one's attention on the pleasures of others; this will bring to mind their pleasures and increase the benevolent desire to obtain those pleasures for them. One can try to decrease the competing self-interested desires by bringing to mind the transitory nature and unreliability of personal pleasures. These two procedures will be discussed further when I discuss the fourth way in which the moral sense can influence action. Here I want to discuss the possibility that a desire to be motivated by benevolence may lead us to try and remove altogether the competition which self-interest poses to benevolence. Self-interest can only prevent benevolence from motivating if a strong self-interested desire is tending to motivate an action which is inconsistent with the action that benevolence is tending to motivate. If self-interest and benevolence incline us towards doing the same action, then that action will probably ensue, for the strengths of desires for the same action can be added. The virtue of this action will not be greater than if benevolence alone motivated it, but the action is more likely to get done if self-interest and benevolence combine their motivational force. Thus a desire to behave from benevolence becomes a desire to see that one's self-interest lies in those actions which benevolence also dictates:

"Some alledge that merit supposes, beside kind affection, that the agent has a moral sense, reflects upon his own virtue, delights in it, and chooses to adhere to it for the pleasure which attends it. ... This reflection shows to him a motive of self-love, the joint view to which does not increase our approbation. ... But the reflection on virtue, the being once charmed with the lovely form, will discover



an interest on its side which, if well attended to, no other motive will overbalance. This reflection is a great security to the character, and must be supposed in such creatures as men are, before we can well depend upon a constancy in virtue. The same may be said of many other motives to virtue from interest which, though they do not immediately influence the kind affections of the agent, yet remove these obstacles to them, from false appearances of interest. Such are these from ... the manifest advantages of virtue in this life, without reflection on which, a steady course of virtue is scarce to be expected amidst the present confusion of human affairs." (Illustrations, p. 174).

The belief that our self-interest lies in doing benevolent acts cannot be generated at will. Beliefs are the responsibility of the faculty of reason, not of volition. But we can create beliefs in an indirect manner. In the case of creating the belief that our best self-interest lies in benevolence, we proceed by concentrating our attention on those pleasures which will result from such action, and by noting the unreliability and triviality of competing pleasures. By doing so, we will be able to convince ourselves that our self-interest dictates the same actions as benevolence, (cf. above quotation). Hutcheson believes that this belief will result if sufficient attention is paid to the matter because he believes that the belief is in fact true. Our greatest self-interest actually does lie in being benevolent. Thus this is not an advocacy of self-deceit, as some of Hutcheson's suggestions are. It is a claim that the moral sense can provide a motive for examining in a particular fashion the question of what is in our interest, and that doing those acts which the moral sense approves will result from this.

I do not think it is important to consider Hutcheson's arguments that our greatest self-interest lies in being benevolent (cf. Inquiry,

Ch. VI, p. 244-265; and Essay, Ch. V, p. 127-166). Rather it is more important to note the role that these proofs play in Hutcheson's overall theory. In proving that doing benevolent acts will lead to our greatest pleasure, Hutcheson is not trying to reduce benevolence to self-interest. He has argued at length that this cannot be done, and he is not contradicting himself on this point. His proofs are designed to show that self-interest is not a competition to benevolence, and that it will not motivate actions inconsistent with benevolence if we understand what is in our own best interests in the long run. Hutcheson makes the point quite plainly; in the preface to the 'Essay' he says:

"It may perhaps seem strange, that when in this treatise virtue is supposed disinterested; yet so much pain is taken, by a comparison of our several pleasures, to prove the pleasures of virtue to be the greatest we are capable of, and that consequently it is our truest interest to be virtuous. But let it be remembered here, that though there can be no motives or arguments suggested which can directly raise any ultimate desire, such as that of our own happiness, or publick affections, ... yet if both are natural dispositions of our minds, and nothing can stop the operation of publick affections but some selfish interest, the only way to give publick affections their full force, and to make them prevalent in our lives, must be to remove these opinions of opposite interests, and to shew a superior interest on their side." (Essay, p. viii-ix; also cf. Inquiry, p. 270).

The point is not to reduce benevolence to self-interest, but to remove the competition that self-interest is normally thought to provide to benevolence. The actions which result are not more virtuous for this, but they are more likely to result.

One further point should be added to this section. Hutcheson's proof that our greatest self-interest lies in being benevolent involves

an appeal to the pleasure of self-approbation, and to the pleasures provided by our sense of honour. Thus he is using in this argument the conclusions I attributed to him in the previous section; to wit, that the desire for self-approbation can motivate actions even if this does not make the actions virtuous. But perhaps it is more pertinent to the central question of this chapter to note that the moral sense can influence our behaviour by adding a self-interested motive to the benevolent desires to help others. Thus this section has uncovered two methods by which the moral sense can influence our behaviour. Firstly, it creates a desire that we should act out of benevolence; this desire leads us to contemplate the pleasures of being virtuous. Secondly, the moral sense adds a pleasure to virtue so that when we do so contemplate the pleasures of virtue, we discover that that is the source of our greatest possible happiness.

4. The fourth and final way in which the moral sense could influence our actions is by generating a desire to be virtuous. This it in fact must do; since the contemplation of our own virtue gives us pleasure, there must be some desire for this pleasure. The desire to be virtuous, given Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense, is the desire to have benevolent affections. This is slightly different from the desire mentioned in the previous section, the desire to act from those benevolent affections which we already have, for the present possibility is the desire to actually create benevolent desires. It is the desire of desires, or we might say, a meta-desire.

This approach, the desire for desires, seems to have the problem that the creation of desires is not an act of volition; so it would appear that we desire something that in fact is not within our power

to obtain. Hutcheson gets around this problem by claiming that although we cannot create desires by mere acts of volition, we can create them by indirect means. As in the case of eliminating the competitors of benevolence discussed above, indirect means for creating desires rely on the fact that beliefs about possible future pleasures or pains, our own or others, automatically cause a desire to arise in us. Concentrating on and carefully attending to the pleasures that we can give to others will automatically create a desire to obtain those pleasures for other people.

"If any one should ask, since none of these motives of self-interest excite our benevolence, but we are in virtuous actions intending solely the good of others, to what purpose serves our moral sense, our sense of pleasure from the happiness of others? ... The answer to (this) question was given partly already: all these motives may make us desire to have benevolent affections, and consequently turn our attention to those qualities in objects which excite them; ..." (Inquiry, p. 150; cf. also Essay, p. 25-26).

This basic desire of creating benevolent feelings by concentrating our attention on the pleasures we can give to others is liable to a great deal of sophistication by taking into account how the other aspects of human nature influence the degree of our benevolent desires. We tend to feel benevolent towards those who have similar attitudes towards us, to those who bear us no harm, to those who are virtuous and give us pleasure in that way, etc. In other words, it is part of human nature that we tend to feel more benevolent towards those we believe are of a certain sort, and tend not to feel benevolent towards those whom we believe are unworthy of our benevolence. This raises the possibility that we can increase or even create benevolent desires by convincing ourselves that others are worthy of our benevolence. Here again we can create benevolence by having the right beliefs, and

again we create those beliefs by attending to those aspects of the world which support those beliefs, and ignoring those aspects which tend to undermine them. In this case the desired belief is the belief that other people are good, kind, virtuous, and generally worthy of all our attempts to bring them happiness. This sort of belief will be supported by all the good we know to reside in others, and be contradicted by knowledge of the evil which lurks in the hearts of men. These beliefs can be encouraged, therefore, by attending to the good qualities of others and by not paying attention to their bad, by taking great pains to find out their good qualities and by not making similar efforts to find out their bad points, by believing the good we hear of others and by suspending judgement on the bad we hear,<sup>8</sup> and by reflecting that human nature is never intentionally vicious. This almost amounts to a programme of intentional self-deceit, for doing what we can to encourage a good opinion of our fellow men, and for systematically ignoring their worser aspects. This attitude is created by the desire to have benevolent desires, plus the realization that we are more likely to feel benevolent towards those we have a high opinion of.

It may be thought that this desire to be virtuous is a strong desire if it can have such an influence on our system of beliefs, but it should be remembered that the desire for virtue is created, for Hutcheson, by a belief about the possibilities of the pleasures of virtue. These pleasures he views as being very great indeed; in fact, he thinks them the greatest of which mankind is capable. So

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8. Hutcheson thinks we can always suspend our judgement in the face of evidence, provided that the evidence does not amount to a conclusive proof (Essay, p. 33).

it is not very surprising that the desire they generate is a strong desire.

Perhaps this is a good point to note the most curious feature of this theory of Hutcheson's. The desire for the pleasures of virtue is a self-interested desire; but it is a desire to have the entirely non-self-interested desire of benevolence. This means that though virtuous actions are not motivated by self-interest, self-interest leads us to create the benevolent desires which in turn motivate virtuous actions. Hutcheson is quite explicitly aware of this point:

"Benevolence is our greatest happiness; and thence we may resolve to cultivate, as much as possible, this sweet disposition, and to despise every opposite interest. Not that we can be truly virtuous, if we intend only to obtain the pleasure which arises from benevolence, without the love of others: nay, this very pleasure is founded on our being conscious of disinterested love to others, as the spring of our actions. But self-interest may be our motive in studying to raise these kind affections, and to continue in this agreeable state; tho' it cannot be the sole or principle motive of any action, which to our moral sense appears virtuous."  
(Inquiry, p. 197).

The above sections of this chapter are perhaps in need of summary. It was originally suggested that Hutcheson had a problem in explaining how the moral sense could influence us towards being virtuous. Any desire created by our sense of what was virtuous would be a self-interested desire for, or caused by, the pleasures of self-approbation. But since these would be self-interested desires, any action which they motivated would not be approved by the moral sense; thus the object of the desire, self-approbation, is inconsistent with the nature of the desire itself. Despite this, Hutcheson thinks that such desire can motivate actions; but they cannot for him motivate virtuous actions.

Hutcheson's solution to this problem was then explained. The

moral sense creates desires, not for objects in the world, but for objects within us. We desire that benevolence should result in actions, and we desire that we should have benevolent desires. These desires for the control of our desires lead us to try to control our beliefs about possible pleasures and pains, for desires cannot be controlled by direct volition. There are three fundamental ways in which we can cause or encourage benevolent desires. Firstly, we can remove the competition from self-interest by realizing that our greatest self-interest actually lies in being virtuous. Secondly, we can encourage our benevolent feelings by concentrating on or attending to the pleasure we can give others. Finally, we can create as good an opinion of our fellow men as possible by attending to their better aspects and ignoring their faults. By these methods, benevolent desires and actions, and thus virtue, is encouraged. The motive for this encouragement is provided by the pleasures of the moral sense. Thus the moral sense greatly influences us towards being virtuous, but one is not involved in the paradox of pursuing the good of others from a motive of self-interest.

The ingenuity of this solution may strike some as being rather ad hoc, and as having little relation to reality. I now wish to establish that this is not the case, and that the theory cashed out of its philosophical terms makes eminent good sense as a moral theory for human beings.

If one removes Hutcheson's claims from his terminology of 'pleasure and pain', 'desires', and the 'moral sense', I think the essence of his theory of how the moral sense influences our behaviour is as follows: Our knowledge of the virtue of benevolent actions

causes us to wish that we had more generous feelings towards our fellow men. Such kind feelings cannot be called up at will, but will be enhanced if we take an optimistic view of the virtues of others, and if we attend carefully to the good we can actually do for others. We can attempt to be more virtuous by encouraging the generous affections we have towards other people.

"But virtue itself, or good dispositions of mind, are not directly taught, or produc'd by instruction; they must be originally implanted in our nature by its great Author, and afterwards strengthen'd and confirm'd by our own cultivation." (Inquiry, p. 271).

Central to this theory is the claim that on particular occasions our feelings are more likely to influence our behaviour than rational considerations. This means that the desire for virtue is not so much a motive to particular good acts, but rather is a motive to try and develop within oneself the sort of personality in which generous feelings will more or less automatically lead one to do the good. "... in moral philosophy, which is the art of living well, the importance of the matter requires habit and continual exercise ... this in our present degenerate state must require almost continual attention and internal discipline..." (Introduction, p. 96). Here we can see the importance of preaching to Hutcheson's concept of a moral philosopher; it is a vital part of the philosopher's job to bring to the attention of others those considerations which are likely to lead to a more generous personality. We will not always have time when confronted by particular moral dilemmas for these complicated reasonings to generate benevolent feelings, but reflecting on the desire for virtue in our spare time will hopefully instil in our



nature the generosity and benevolence which are the immediate motives for morally good acts. If one accepts that the morality of particular acts lies in the motive for which they are done, then interpreting the desire for virtue as the desire to see that morally good motives are a prominent part of our character makes perfectly good sense. I think Hutcheson has successfully solved the problem with which this chapter began.

## 6. Hutcheson vs. the Rationalists

### i. The Structure of Hutcheson's Argument

In writing his first book, the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson was primarily interested in presenting a view of morality which was an alternative to the egoistical theories of Hobbes and Mandeville. But within three or four months of the publication of the 'Inquiry' in January or February of 1725,<sup>1</sup> Hutcheson's theory was criticized from the viewpoint of a school of moral philosophers who had an alternative reply to the egoists. With the publication of a letter from Gilbert Burnet in the April 1725 issue of the London Journal, Hutcheson found that he needed to defend his theory from the criticisms of the rationalists, as well as replying to the egoists. There ensued a public correspondence between Hutcheson and Burnet on the role of reason in morality. Hutcheson replied to Burnet in the London Journal in June and October, 1725, but then discontinued the debate because he felt that his reply to the rationalists required a more lengthy development. The result was a treatise, the 'Illustrations', which he added to his next book which he published in 1728. In the 'Illustrations', Hutcheson criticizes the rationalists' position primarily as it is presented by Wollaston and Samuel Clarke.

But the 'Illustrations' was not the end of the debate, for Richard Price was later to criticize Hutcheson from a better developed rationalist's position. However, a word of caution must be added here. To call Clarke, Wollaston, and Price all rationalists tends to obscure an important fact; the issue between Hutcheson and the

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1. On the question of the month of publication, cf. Scott, p. 31.

rationalists as Hutcheson interprets it in the 'Illustrations', is quite different from the issue between Hutcheson and Price. The other sections of this chapter deal with Hutcheson's criticism of rationalism, and Price's criticisms of Hutcheson, but comment must be made first on the issues involved, for the nature of the issues determines the nature of the criticisms.

Hutcheson interprets the rationalists as making two separate claims; firstly, that moral concepts are reducible to, or definable in terms of, non-moral concepts which originate in the faculty of reason; and secondly, that reason provides the motivation for good acts. It is in the context of separating these two assertions that Hutcheson draws the distinction between justifying and exciting reasons. A justifying reason is a reason for approving morally of an act; an exciting reason is the consideration or desire which motivates the act. The argument of the 'Illustrations' is designed primarily to show that "all exciting reasons presuppose instincts and affections and the justifying presuppose a moral sense." (Illustrations, p. 121, also p. 130). Hutcheson assumes throughout that if he can prove that exciting reasons presuppose affections, (i.e. that there is a desire which is the motivating cause of every human action), then he has proved that reason cannot provide the motive for virtuous acts. This is probably an uncontentious assumption, for few would assign desires to the faculty of reason. But Hutcheson makes a similar assumption in the case of moral approval, and this assumption has been questioned. He assumes that if he can show that moral concepts are not reducible to the non-moral concepts usually associated with the faculty of reason, then he has shown that justifying reasons, and hence moral

approval, presupposes the moral sense.

This last point is of vital importance, for it explains the nature of Hutcheson's argument with the rationalists. Hutcheson is not arguing against the claim that moral ideas, as moral ideas, originate or are intuited by the faculty of reason. This was the position which Price was to take much later, but it is not the position which Hutcheson attributed to the rationalists,<sup>2</sup> and hence was not the position he was criticizing. Hutcheson thought that the rationalists were trying to offer a reduction of moral concepts to such non-moral concepts as truth, reason, or "significancy of truth". It is this reduction that he is objecting to, for it contradicts his claim that there are moral ideas which are simple and unanalysable. Once the reduction of moral to non-moral ideas is refuted, and the claim that moral ideas are simple is defended from this criticism, Hutcheson assumes that he has defended successfully his moral sense theory. The rationalist attack as he sees it is on the simplicity of moral ideas, not on their origin in a sense. The possibility that moral ideas are simple and irreducible to non-moral ideas, but arise in the faculty of reason, not in a sense, does not seem to have occurred to him (except for the possibility of virtue being a relation, which I will consider in section iv of this chapter). He would probably have considered an argument over whether simple moral ideas arise in the faculty of reason, or in a moral sense, a mere verbal quibble; the merits of such a position will be considered below in the content of Price's criticism of the moral sense.

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2. Throughout this chapter, it is the position that Hutcheson attributed to the rationalist which is under discussion. Whether Clarke, Wollaston, or any one else actually held the position which Hutcheson is attacking is a question I will not attempt to answer.

The fact that Hutcheson is criticizing the reduction of moral to non-moral concepts, rather than arguing that simple moral ideas arise in a sense and not in the faculty of reason, explains the structure of his argument against the rationalists. He first spends a great deal of his time stating precisely the various possible rationalist's reductions as he sees them. This was made necessary by the fact that neither Wollaston nor Clarke, and certainly not Burnet, were very clear writers. There is also the possibility that these writers were not attempting the sort of reduction that Hutcheson was criticizing, but the accuracy of Hutcheson's interpretation is not the topic of this chapter. Hutcheson thought that the rationalists were proposing a number of different reductions, and in his attempts to clarify their arguments, he often himself proposes several possible reductions for a particular rationalist phrase or definition. This means that he has to reply to a multitude of possible reductions, and that he cannot rely on a single refutation of rationalism. The effect of this state of affairs is to make the structure of his arguments against the rationalists similar to the structure of his arguments against egoism; in both cases he must reply separately to the various possible reductions. The purpose of this chapter is not to follow all of Hutcheson's discussion of rationalism, but rather to make clear the sort of criticisms he makes of the rationalist's reductions.

If the naturalistic fallacy be the fallacy of trying to define moral concepts in terms of non-moral concepts, then the above discussion makes it clear that Hutcheson is accusing the rationalists of committing the naturalistic fallacy. Which non-moral concepts he thinks the rationalists are using will become clear in the next section. Here

I wish to point out that Hutcheson's comments on circular definitions, which he makes throughout the 'Illustrations', only make sense when seen in the light of the accusation that the naturalistic fallacy is central to the rationalists' position. On several occasions, Hutcheson points out that a proposed rationalist's definition presupposes some other moral concept; that is, that there is a moral term in the definiens. Having made this point, he usually drops the argument there, as though he thought that this was a conclusive refutation of the rationalist in this instance. This makes sense if one sees Hutcheson as arguing against the reduction of moral to non-moral terms, for if there is a moral term in the definiens, then there is no such reduction. Since that is all that Hutcheson is trying to prove, he is right in thinking that he need say no more. For example, to some of Wollaston's attempts to reduce moral good to "significancy of truth", Hutcheson seems to think that the following is a conclusive refutation:

"One may see that he has had some other idea of moral good previous to this significancy of truth by his introducing, in the very explication of it, words presupposing the ideas of morality previously known, such as 'right', 'obligation', 'lie', 'his' denoting 'property'." (Illustrations, p. 155)

If one sees Wollaston as arguing that moral ideas can be reduced to non-moral ideas, and this is what Hutcheson thinks he is doing, then this does indeed show that he has failed in his task.

In fact, this question of definitions provides Hutcheson with what is perhaps the only argument he applies to all of the rationalists. He invites us at one point to try to substitute the various definitions of 'obligation' which any philosopher offers, for the term 'obligation'

in the rest of that philosopher's works, and see if this makes sense. He obviously thinks, though he does not directly prove, that there is no definition of 'obligation' which will survive this test:

"Many other confused definitions have been given of obligation by no obscure names in the learned world.... To pursue them all would be endless; only let the definitions be substituted in the place of the word obligation, in other parts of each writer, and let it be observed whether it makes good sense or not." (Illustrations, p. 130-131)

This is obviously to suggest that there is no reduction of obligation possible.

Raphael points out<sup>3</sup> that it is very questionable whether or not Hutcheson's own definition of obligation will survive this test.<sup>4</sup> The possibility that Hutcheson himself has committed the naturalistic fallacy by reducing moral approval to pleasure is examined above in Chapter 3.

The structure of Hutcheson's other line of criticism of the rationalists is in some ways similar to the structure of his attempts to refute their reduction of moral to non-moral concepts. The rationalists, according to Hutcheson, not only tried to reduce the concepts of moral approval to concepts which arose in the faculty of reason; they also committed the error of locating in the faculty of reason the motive for doing virtuous acts. Since for Hutcheson, desires cannot originate in the faculty of reason, this proposal was inconsistent with his theory that every action presupposes a desire as its motive, and further it was inconsistent with his view that a

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3. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 36.

4. Hutcheson defines 'obligation' in Illustrations, p. 130.

specific desire, benevolence, is the motive for all virtuous acts. Thus Hutcheson could no more accept an attempt to locate the motive for virtuous actions in reason, than he could accept the egoists' attempts to locate the motive in self-interest. Hutcheson offers several critiques of various suggestions of how and why reason is the motive for virtuous actions. As in the case of the egoists' reductions and the rationalists' other reductions, Hutcheson finds that he has to reply separately to several proposals; hence his argument has a similar structure in this sense in all three cases. However, on the question of whether reason is the motive for virtuous actions, Hutcheson does have one argument which he can apply to all suggestions; that is, he can always argue that reason cannot motivate any sort of action, and hence there is no possible way for it to motivate virtuous actions. These various arguments are the topic of section iii of this chapter. That section will also make comments on Hutcheson's explanation of why it seems plausible to suggest that reason is the motive for virtuous actions.

Price's criticism of Hutcheson, although from a rationalist's position, is not an attempt to defend the sort of rationalist position which Hutcheson was criticizing. The issue between Price and Hutcheson, and the issue between Hutcheson and the earlier rationalists, are quite distinct. Price accepted that some moral ideas are simple and unanalysable, but he disagreed with Hutcheson that this implied that they were the impressions of a moral sense. Price claimed that moral ideas are directly intuited by the faculty of reason. Hutcheson had failed to anticipate this possibility, probably because he would have viewed it as a verbal quibble over whether the moral



faculty was to be called reason or sense. In section v of this chapter, I will try to show that Price's criticisms are more substantial than that. Hutcheson did consider, and reject, one possible theory of reason as the origin of moral ideas which was not explicitly an attempt to reduce moral to non-moral concepts. In the 'Illustrations', he criticized the view that moral ideas are relations, and hence known by reason. His rejection of this view I will consider in section iv, but the following section will make it clear that this is not the position which Price held.

In remaining clear on the different issues involved in Hutcheson's attack on the rationalists, and Price's attack on Hutcheson, it is, I have stressed, important to keep separate Price's position and the position of the earlier rationalists as Hutcheson saw it. Price is obviously an intuitionist of sorts; Hutcheson saw the earlier rationalists as reductionists. However, confusion can arise not only if one fails to see that the earlier rationalists and Price's position are different; it can also arise if one is not clear on the fact that two aspects of Hutcheson's theory are involved. As was discussed at length in Chapter 3 above, the moral sense has for Hutcheson two aspects which he fails adequately to separate or even ensure are mutually consistent. On the one hand, he maintains that moral ideas are simple and unanalysable, and that this is why there is the need to postulate the existence of the moral sense as their source. It is this intuitionist aspect of his theory which he opposes to the rationalist reductions. On the other hand, Hutcheson also tends to identify moral perception with feelings. Unless one accepts Hutcheson's view that feeling and perception are the same sort of

thing, then the identification of moral ideas with a type of feeling looks like a reduction of moral ideas to feelings. It was to this aspect of Hutcheson's theory that Price opposed his intuitionism; Price interpreted Hutcheson as a type of emotivist. In the context of the two debates with the rationalists, the emotivist and intuitionist aspects of Hutcheson's theory became confused with the question of a naturalistic reduction. Hutcheson opposes his intuitionism against the rationalists' reduction, but is in turn accused of reductionism from Price's intuitionist position. One must see the issues involved in Hutcheson's critique of rationalism from the intuitionist side of his theory, and see the later debate with Price from the emotivist side of his theory.

## ii. Arguments against the Rationalists

In the 'Illustrations', sections i to iii, Hutcheson interprets several passages of the rationalists' writings as being attempts to reduce moral concepts to the non-moral concepts usually associated with reason. There are basically four such suggestions that he deals with; he considers the possibilities that the virtue of actions may consist in "conformity to truth", in conformity to "a truth showing an action to be fit to attain an end", in conformity to a truth that an end is reasonable, or in the "significancy of truth". Hutcheson replies to each of these separately, but the sort of replies he gives can be divided into three types. To some suggestions, he points out that all actions, virtuous or otherwise, fit the proposed criterion for virtue; this obviously eliminates the proposal as distinguishing virtuous from non-virtuous actions. Secondly, to some suggestions

he replies by pointing out that the proposed criterion for virtue presupposes another moral concept. Why Hutcheson thinks that this is a suitable reply I have discussed in the previous section above. Finally, to some suggestions he gives examples to show that the proposed criterion for virtue does not draw the line between virtue and vice in a place which is at all acceptable. Perhaps this procedure relies on our moral intuitions, but Hutcheson's examples are not always contentious ones. The following discussion of the four rationalists' proposals and Hutcheson's criticism of them, should clarify these three types of replies.

1. Hutcheson first interprets the phrase "conformity to truth" as meaning that there are true propositions which can be stated about the action. This seems a curious suggestion, but it follows from Hutcheson's definition of reason and the rationalists' suggestion that the virtue of an action consists in its reasonableness. Hutcheson begins this chapter by saying:

"Since reason is understood to denote our power of finding out true propositions, reasonableness must denote the same thing with conformity to true propositions or to truth." (Illustrations, p. 120)

Hutcheson's reply to the suggestion that the virtue of an act consists in the fact that the act conforms to a true proposition is to point out that all actions, virtuous as well as vicious, conform to some true propositions; thus this cannot be the criterion for virtue.

He sums up the argument thus:

"If conformity to truth, or reasonable, denote nothing else but that 'an action is the object of a true proposition', it is plain that all actions should be approved equally, since as many truths may be made about the worst, as can be made about the best." (Illustrations, p. 128)

2. The second possibility that Hutcheson considers is that the virtue of an action consists in its conformity to a truth showing it to be fit to attain an end. Since the relation of means to ends is in fact a relation for Hutcheson, and hence must be known by reason, there is, he admits, a sense in which an action is reasonable if it is the means to a desired end. However, he objects to this notion of reasonableness being the criterion for virtue on the same grounds as he rejected the first suggestion; namely, that all actions, virtuous or vicious, have this property.

"Here it is plain, 'a truth showing an action to be fit to attain an end,' does not justify it; nor do we approve a subordinate end for any truth which only shows it to be fit to promote the ultimate end; for the worst actions may be conducive to their ends, and reasonable in that sense." (Illustrations, p. 128-129)

3. Hutcheson concludes from his discussion of the second suggestion above, that the issue must be one of judging ends and not means. So the question becomes: "Does a conformity to any truth make us approve of an ultimate end, previously to any moral sense?" (Illustrations, p. 129). Hutcheson then lists several truths that have been suggested as the criterion for virtuous ends. His procedure in objecting to these is different from the first two cases, for obviously not all actions conform to a given end. To each of four suggested ends he points out either that the end is approved for some other non-moral reason, such as self-love, or if it is approved of for itself, then there must be a faculty in us which so approves it. This, he exclaims with triumph, must be the moral sense.

a. The first truth he considers is "It is the end proposed by the Deity". But he then asks; "But why do we approve concurring with

divine ends? This reason is given, 'He is our benefactor'. But then, for what reason do we approve concurring with a benefactor? Here we must recur to a sense." (Illustrations, p. 129). There are I think, two possible interpretations of this passage. The first, suggested by Raphael,<sup>5</sup> interprets Hutcheson as saying that the list of 'reasons for' approving of something cannot be infinite, and that since we must stop giving reasons somewhere, the last term must presuppose a (moral) sense. To this argument Raphael quite rightly objects that Hutcheson gives us no reason for thinking that the last term must be a sense perception. A similar impossibility of giving an infinite series of 'reasons for' applies in the case of believing things to be true, but even Hutcheson admits that the last term in that sort of sequence might be discernible by reason and not a sense. Raphael, very plausibly, if one accepts this first interpretation of Hutcheson's argument, suggests why Hutcheson might be confused on this point:

"But Hutcheson just assumes that this final discernment must be made by sense. He never considers the possibility that reason may be a faculty of immediate apprehension. I suspect that his failure to consider this possibility lies in a confusion of two senses of the word 'reason'. He thinks that to say something is perceived by 'reason' is the same as saying 'a reason' can be given for it. This is clear from his language throughout this section."<sup>6</sup>

It is, of course, an error to think that a reason can be given for every truth perceived by reason; and presumably Hutcheson would have agreed if the point had been explicitly put to him.

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5. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 34.

6. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 35.

The other interpretation of this passage in Hutcheson has the advantage over the first interpretation of being a better argument and perhaps not as open to criticism. However, it has the disadvantage of assuming that Hutcheson failed to express himself at all adequately on this occasion. Still, I think this second interpretation is consistent with this passage, and is perhaps supported by the context of the rest of this section in Hutcheson. Hutcheson is trying throughout this section to prove that moral approval cannot be reduced to discerning truths. His point in this passage may be that no matter what truth is offered as justifying approval, one can always ask 'But why should the fact that this is true make me approve?' Thus his argument may be that no statement of fact, no true proposition, can ever be offered as a reason for approving of an end because one can always ask 'But why should that truth be a reason for approving of this end?' This interpretation suggests that the problem is not that an infinite number of reasons cannot be given, but rather than no reason can ever be given at all. Or, to be more precise, that a true proposition can never constitute a reason for approving. The context of the rest of this section suggests that what he ought to be trying to prove is that approval cannot be reduced to any particular true proposition, and I think he is right in pointing out that for any proposition which is a statement of fact, this is true. And I think his argument is a valid proof of this point.

Part of the difficulty in interpreting this passage may lie in the examples that Hutcheson uses. To Hutcheson and the audience for which he was writing, that a certain end was "proposed by the Deity" and that "God is our benefactor", were statements of fact;

their truth would not be in doubt. The question is - given their truth, do we approve of ends because they are in conformity with them? The question of discerning truth is not what is at stake. Rather, on this interpretation, he is concerned with the role of true propositions in justifying approval.

There is, I think, one possible objection to Hutcheson's argument as this second interpretation presents it. I agree that for any statement of fact one can always ask 'But why should that truth make me approve of a certain end?' But what if someone advances a proposition as true (and hence discerned by reason, Hutcheson must admit) which contains within it the claim that one ought to approve of some end? In this case it would not make sense to ask 'But why approve?'; the reason for approving is contained in the (true) proposition. An example might be: "We ought to approve of what the Deity wills". Hutcheson's reply to this would be to point out that such a proposition contains a moral term, and hence that one is not defining moral approval by conformity to some truth, for one is not explaining moral approval at all if the proposition contains a reference to approval. This point I will return to below in item c.

b. The second truth Hutcheson considers is that the "study of the publick good tends to the advantage of the agent." This, he points out, is to approve because of self-interest, not because the principle is true, or conforms to reason.

c. Hutcheson also considers the truth "that it is best all be happy." He shows that either this presupposes a moral term (i.e. 'morally best'), or that the moral sense approves of happiness.

These examples are intended to show that if a truth, as known by

reason, is accepted as a moral criterion, then the moral approval of that truth, not the acceptance of the truth as true, presupposes a faculty or sense of moral approval. If the truth contains a moral term, then for Hutcheson the attempted reduction of moral terms to the non-moral notion of truth would have failed. Hutcheson considers one truth of this form; to the possible truth "that it is (morally) best all be happy", Hutcheson replies that by this "they explain one word by itself in a circle." (Illustrations, p. 129). His point is that if a truth contains a moral term (such as 'morally best') one cannot define morality as conformity to that truth, for the truth presupposes morality.

4. In Section III of the 'Illustrations', Hutcheson considers Wollaston's theory that the morality of an action depends on whether the action signifies a truth or a falsehood. Since truth and falsehood are known by reason and not by sense, if Wollaston is correct, then Hutcheson's moral sense theory must be in error. But the nature of the theory that Hutcheson is refuting should be noted; Wollaston, as interpreted by Hutcheson, is not arguing that reason is the source of basic, irreducible moral ideas, but rather is arguing that moral ideas are reducible to the non-moral ideas of truth and falsity. In fairness to Wollaston, it should be mentioned that the sort of criticism that Hutcheson makes of his theory may refute a theory that Wollaston did not hold. Hume's critique of Wollaston is similar to Hutcheson's in that Hume also is criticizing the reduction of moral qualities to the notion of truth.<sup>7</sup> But Hume's critique has been examined in meticulous detail and found wanting on the grounds that

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7. Hume, Treatise, p. 458.



Wollaston did not hold the theory that Hume is objecting to, and that Hume begs the question on the real points at issue between himself and Wollaston.<sup>8</sup> However, it is not within the design of this thesis to examine Hutcheson's interpretation of Wollaston for accuracy. Rather I will confine the discussion to Hutcheson's critique of Wollaston's theory as Hutcheson interpreted it; and Hutcheson clearly interpreted it as an attempt to reduce moral to non-moral qualities.

As is usual with Hutcheson's comments on the rationalists, a great deal of this third section is devoted to proposing interpretations of what the rationalists said. Wollaston, according to Hutcheson, had claimed that virtue is the "significancy of truth in actions." (Illustrations, p. 146). Hutcheson then proceeds to analyse the notions of truth and significance as they might apply to actions; he suggests a multitude of possibilities, and for each he gives reasons why it is not a satisfactory analysis of moral concepts. Not all of these interpretations of "significancy of truth in actions" need to be examined, for the sort of argument which Hutcheson uses will be clear from a few examples. Hutcheson begins by distinguishing a number of aspects of "signifying"; e.g. what the agent intended to signify, what the observer understood as being signified, what a knowledgeable observer would have understood, what was suggested but not asserted, etc. No fewer than ten aspects of signifying are given for the act of saying a sentence,<sup>9</sup> and similar distinctions are made

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8. Cf. Tweyman, chapter 5, sec. ii and chapter 4, sec. iii.

9. Illustrations, p. 147. Hutcheson, probably rightly, considers that the strongest case for Wollaston's theory can be made with respect to speech, but he concludes that even in speech morality does not consist only in signifying truth. Cf. Illustrations, p. 149.

throughout the rest of the chapter in other contexts. The most important idea lying behind most of these distinctions is that which is known today as the use-mention distinction. Hutcheson notes that mentioning a sentence to convey a meaning but not to assert anything, as in giving an example or in fiction, is quite distinct from using a sentence or act to assert the truth of a proposition. Significance in the sense of meaning is common to both of these, but it is obvious that this sort of significance is not the origin of morality, for merely mentioning a falsehood is not evil. "If it were, then every dramatic writer drawing evil characters, every history-painter, every writer of allegories or epics, every philosopher teaching the nature of contradictory propositions, would be thought criminal." (Illustrations, p. 151).

Hutcheson has equally little trouble in showing that morality does not originate in what an observer takes to be signified by an action, for the morality of one person cannot depend on the powers of understanding in the observer:

"Did virtue consist in this first sort of significancy of truth, it would depend not upon the agent but the sagacity of the observer. The acute penetration of one would constitute an action virtuous, and the rashness or stupidity of another would make it vicious. And the most barbarous actions would raise no false opinion of the sentiments of the agent in a judicious observer." (Illustrations, p. 151)

This seems to leave only the possibility that the morality of actions originates in some fashion or other in what the agent intends to signify. Hutcheson is quick to point out that this is to locate morality in intentions and not in significancy, but he also tries to show that an action which does not mislead, and which does not intend to, may still be vicious. For example, if a person were in fact

malicious, then a malicious act would mislead no-one about the truth, but would still be an evil action (cf. Illustrations, p. 154). He tries to show, mainly by example, that one can be entirely truthful and still commit evil acts.

The opinion that morality is reducible to signifying truth may originate, Hutcheson suggests, in the application to lying of the theory known today as rule-utilitarianism (cf. Illustrations, p. 148-149). Some authors have claimed that lying is never justified in particular cases, for even if greater good would appear to result in that instance, the resulting loss of mutual confidence is always greater:

"Some stricter moralists assert that the public evils which would ensue from destroying mutual confidence by allowing to speak propositions known to be false on any occasion are so great that no particular advantage to be expected from speaking known logical falsehoods can ever over-balance them; that all use of speech supposes a tacit convention of sincerity, the violation of which is always evil." (Illustrations, p. 148-149)

Hutcheson points out that this is not to make truth the ultimate moral quality, for truth has been justified in terms of the public good; it is only because lying has a "tendency to the public detriment of society" that it is censured. (It is interesting to note in passing that having recognized the act-rule utilitarian distinction in this context, Hutcheson never seems to take any further interest in the issue, and never applies it to his own theory).

Hutcheson also uses against Wollaston the claim that the reduction of moral ideas to significance of truth is unacceptable if reference is made to other moral ideas;

"One may see that he has had some other idea of moral good previous to this significancy of truth by his introducing, in the very explication of it, words presupposing the ideas of morality previously known, such as 'right', 'obligation', 'lie', 'his' denoting 'property'." (Illustrations, p. 155)

This argument makes it clear what Hutcheson is trying to argue against in this chapter. He is not arguing against the view that morality has its origins in conformity to a moral truth which is perceived by our faculty of reason; rather he is arguing that moral ideas are not reducible to the non-moral ideas of truth, signifying truth, etc. Hence he is not begging the question when he points out that Wollaston's definition of moral good presupposes some other moral term; pointing this out refutes Wollaston's approach as Hutcheson interprets it.

### iii. Reason not the Motive for Virtuous Acts

The basic reason why the faculty of reason cannot be the origin of the motives to virtuous actions, is that for Hutcheson, reason cannot motivate any sort of actions, virtuous or otherwise. All intentional actions are motivated by desires, and desires do not arise in the faculty of reason.<sup>10</sup> This, as I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> is not to deny that some desires are reasonable in the sense that they are calm and general.

For Hutcheson, reason's only role is to discover truth: in particular, to discover truths about relations, including means - ends

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10. Cf. above, 2-ii-d.

11. Cf. above, 2-ii-c.

relations. Thus his claim that reason does not motivate is equivalent to the claim that knowledge of truth by itself cannot motivate actions. Something else (namely, a desire), must be present for there to be a motive. Hutcheson proves this by a procedure similar to that by which he proves that truth by itself is not sufficient to make us approve an end.<sup>12</sup> He argues (Illustrations, p. 123), that whatever truth may be offered as a reason or motive for pursuing an end, one can always ask, 'but why should that truth influence my actions?' No truth can ever motivate action, he concludes, and since reason's only role is to establish truth, reason cannot motivate.

Hutcheson expresses this conclusion by saying that there are no exciting reasons which do not presuppose desires. Since by exciting reasons he means that which causes an action, he is claiming that all actions are caused by desires. From the conclusions reached above in Chapter 2 about the nature of desires, this present claim that the cause of any action must be a desire can be cashed out into the following propositions:

Firstly, since desires are mental entities of which we have direct awareness, all intentional actions must be preceded by a certain type of mental entity of which we can be reflectively aware. Hutcheson would prove this by an appeal to introspection.

Secondly, since desires are caused by beliefs about possible pleasures and pains, all intentional actions must be preceded by some beliefs about possible pleasures and pains.<sup>13</sup> Such beliefs would be established by the faculty of reason; so Hutcheson must admit that

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12. Cf. above, 6-ii.

13. Cf. above, 2-ii.

reason can indirectly motivate actions, for it establishes beliefs which cause desires which in turn cause actions.

Taken together, these two claims suggest that the only difference between Hutcheson and a rationalist who claimed that reason, by its discovery of truth, can directly motivate actions, is that Hutcheson insists on inserting a middle term, desires, of which we are directly conscious. But why does Hutcheson think he needs this middle term?

His argument that one can always ask why a truth should motivate, seems to suggest that Hutcheson thought he needed desires as an occult property, as the eighteenth century would have called it. By this I mean a property by which one explains how A (beliefs) can cause B (actions) by postulating a middle term C (desires), such that C is defined as 'that in virtue of which A causes B'. In other words, Hutcheson might be accused of postulating an unnecessary term, 'desires', for the purpose of relating two terms which can be related directly. That this accusation has an element of truth in it, is indicated by the fact that some modern discussions of desires, based as they are on more sophisticated post-Humean notions of cause, interpret desires not as entities but as dispositions which correlate beliefs and actions. (Nagel's approach is something like this.) I think this is an important criticism of Hutcheson, for in the end it is hard to see why he needs desires as an intermediary between beliefs and actions.

But another reason why Hutcheson may have thought he needed desires is that desires act as a device to limit which beliefs can cause actions. The only beliefs which can cause desires are for Hutcheson beliefs about possible pleasures and pains, either our own or someone else's. On this theory, the notion of desires is a way

of saying that beliefs can only motivate actions if there is something in us already, (i.e. a disposition to form desires), in virtue of which some beliefs do, and some do not, influence actions. I think, in fact, that an argument of this sort, though nowhere expressed in Hutcheson's writings, is the reason behind his theory of desires, and his insistence that all exciting reasons presuppose desires. And this also makes clearer what is the real difference between Hutcheson and philosophers like Price who claim that reason by itself can motivate. For Price, actions can be motivated by beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of those actions. But even if Hutcheson accepted Price's definitions of right and wrong, he would have to deny that beliefs about which actions are right or wrong could motivate (even via desires), because such beliefs are not about possible pleasures or pains.

To conclude this brief section, let me summarize these points. Reason cannot motivate virtuous actions for Hutcheson, because reason cannot motivate actions at all. Reason can indirectly cause actions, because some rational beliefs cause desires, which in turn can cause actions. However, only certain beliefs, (i.e. those about possible pleasures and pains), can cause actions in this fashion. Since this is not the sort of rational belief which rationalists like Price believe are the motives for virtuous actions, the difference between Hutcheson and Price on this issue lies in more than the fact that Hutcheson inserts desires in the causal chain between beliefs and actions.

## iv. Moral Ideas not Relations

In Section II of the 'Illustrations', Hutcheson argues against the opinion which he attributes to Samuel Clarke that the basic moral idea is a relation. Hutcheson's defence of his theory on this point has been summarized and criticized by Raphael,<sup>14</sup> who sees in this point one of the central weaknesses in Hutcheson's case against the rationalists. The question of whether basic moral ideas are, or even could be, relations is important for Hutcheson's theory, because since relations are for him known by the faculty of reason, if moral ideas are relations, then there is no need for a moral sense; reason could perceive moral ideas. This section is an attempt to consider the merits of Hutcheson's case on this point.

Hutcheson begins his discussion of the possibility that moral ideas may be relations by claiming that relations are not actually in external objects, but are only ideas which arise upon the mind's comparing two objects: "...relations are not real qualities inherent in external natures but only ideas necessarily accompanying our perception of two objects at once and comparing them" (Illustrations, p. 142). Whether or not this is true, and whether or not it is a criticism of Clarke, it does not seem to be important for the question of whether moral ideas can be relations on Hutcheson's theory. This is because moral ideas do not for Hutcheson represent actual qualities in external objects,<sup>15</sup> so the fact that relations do not actually represent external qualities either, does not answer the question of

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14. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 38-41.

15. Cf. above, chapter 3, sec. ii.



whether moral ideas are relations.

Hutcheson then classifies relations into three types; to wit: i) relations between inanimate objects; ii) relations between inanimate objects and rational agents; iii) and relations between rational agents, (cf. Illustrations, p. 142). (Raphael points out that this ignores the possibility of a moral relation between a rational agent and a sensitive but non-rational creature, but he admits that this is a minor point which does not affect the present argument.)<sup>16</sup> Hutcheson maintains that moral relations must be of the third type, a point which I think can be accepted with Raphael's amendment.

The rest of Hutcheson's discussion is conducted in terms of an analysis of the concept of 'fitting' as it might apply to actions. This is unfortunate for it leads him to ignore aspects of the question he is supposed to be considering in this section; namely, whether or not basic moral ideas are relations.

The word 'fitting' can be applied to actions in one of three ways:

1. It may mean that an action is fitting as the means to an end.

Hutcheson has already argued that morality cannot originate in the means-ends relation itself, since all actions are the means to some end.<sup>17</sup> Thus morality cannot originate in this category of relations.

2. If fitting is applied to ends themselves, then it must be a basic moral attribute of the end; but this presupposes a moral sense for us to perceive that attribute.

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16. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 38-39.

17. Cf. above, chapter 6, sec. ii.

3. Fitting could be used to denote an action fitting as the means to a morally good end. But this obviously presupposes use # 2 above. So one can conclude that the second use is the basic one in morality.

In claiming that use # 2 is basic for the use of the word 'fitting' in a moral context, and that this use presupposes the moral sense, Hutcheson has committed two errors in his attempt to prove his original contention that basic moral ideas are not relations.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, he assumes that a moral relation must be a means-ends relation. Since a means-ends relation cannot apply to an ultimate end, he assumes that the word 'fitting' as applied to ultimate ends must denote a quality or attribute of that end. This is his second error, for once he has established that fittingness must denote a quality, he uses his empiricist's assumption that all awareness of qualities must be by sense perception to conclude that fittingness as applied to ends must be known by a moral sense. But this ignores the possibility that the end itself is a relation, or that the basic moral relation is a relation of the ultimate end which is not a means-ends relation. For example, suppose one suggested that the ultimate moral end was not benevolence, but moral harmony between all rational creatures; in this case, the ultimate moral idea is a relation - and all relations are for Hutcheson known by reason and not sense. In failing to consider such a possibility, he has begged the question as to whether basic moral ideas are relations. This is also the conclusion which Raphael reaches.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Raphael points out both these errors, The Moral Sense, p. 39-40.

19. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 41.

But I do not think that this is all that there is to be said on this topic. Even if Hutcheson's argument that basic moral ideas cannot be relations is inconclusive, there still remains the question of whether there are elements inherent in Hutcheson's theory which would be inconsistent with moral ideas being relational. In fact, I wish to suggest that Hutcheson's theory contains elements which would make it impossible for him to accept that moral ideas are relational without restructuring his entire theory.

There are two points which I wish to raise in this context. The first can best be seen by considering what sort of relations would be possible for Hutcheson, and what the nature of those relations must be. The relation would have to be between rational agents, and would have to contain a reference to benevolence. Thus the following could be taken as the most obvious possibility of a moral relation in the context of the rest of Hutcheson's thought: 'A is in a position to be benevolent to B'; where A is a rational being, and B is a sentient being, rational or not. To ensure that a question of morality arises between A and B, and hence to eliminate irrelevant considerations, one can assume that A can do an obviously benevolent act for B at very little or no cost to himself, and with no detrimental effects to any third party or to society at large. Given this situation, there is no question that any act of A's to help B is a morally good act. The question I wish to raise is this: is it possible that the moral quality in the situation arises from the relationship between A and B, or must the basic moral idea be subsequent to and distinct from that relation? Samuel Clarke would have said the former, Hutcheson the latter. I do not wish to suggest that for Clarke, or any other

rationalist, moral ideas are reducible to non-moral relations such as 'A being in a position to help B'; rather, the suggestion is that moral ideas arise from this sort of relationship between people without reference to factors beyond this relationship. For Hutcheson, moral ideas must refer to something beyond the relation, for moral ideas for him must take into account the motives for actions. Motives are not relations; especially not for Hutcheson who means by motives in this context desires, and for whom desires are some sort of entities.<sup>20</sup> It is obvious that the desire of A to help B presupposes that A believes that he can help B; that is, it presupposes that A knows of the relationship between himself and B. But this does not alter the fact that the motive, or the desire to help B, is distinct from that relation. The desire is some sort of mental entity in A, of which A can have direct internal awareness. This is to say that for Hutcheson moral ideas cannot arise out of relations and still arise out of knowledge of the motives for acts. This does not, of course, prove that Hutcheson is right in locating morality in the motives for actions, it is merely to suggest that more is at stake between Hutcheson and the rationalists than whether moral ideas are perceived by reason or a sense.

The significance of Hutcheson's location of morality in motives, and the violence which would be done to his theory by changing this to locating morality in the relationships between people, can best be seen from considering the question of whether the motive for virtuous acts can be a desire to do one's duty. This question was discussed

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20. Cf. above, chapter 2, sec. ii-c.

earlier,<sup>21</sup> where it was decided that a desire to do one's duty was paradoxical for Hutcheson because of his location of morality in the motives for actions. If, to take Raphael's suggestion,<sup>22</sup> the fundamental moral relation is of the form "A is under an obligation to help B", then there is no paradox at all in A's doing acts which fulfil his obligations from a desire to fulfil those obligations. The paradox only arises if virtue is located in motives, not in relations. This has the further implication that if virtue arises out of relations, then the desire to do virtuous acts is not the desire to have desires which Hutcheson thinks it is. Thus if the rationalist is right, then Hutcheson's whole complicated procedure for showing how the moral sense encourages virtue in an indirect fashion, becomes totally unnecessary.

This raises the second problem involved in locating morality in relations. Relations are perceived by our faculty of reason. How then can our knowledge of a moral relation influence our behaviour? The moral sense can indirectly influence behaviour because it is a source of pleasure and pain, and hence the source of desires. Reason cannot be the source of either pleasure or pain, and hence cannot be the source of desires, so how can it influence our actions? To sum up this whole problem concisely, how can the normative aspects of the moral sense, as outlined above in Chapter 3, section iii, iv, and v, be transferred from a sense to the faculty of reason? How can approval and the perception of relations be made compatible in the faculty of reason?

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21. Above, chapter 5.

22. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 41.

It may be replied to this that Hutcheson has not been overly successful in making the normative aspects of morality compatible with the perceptive aspects of the moral sense, and that the problem would be no greater with respect to perceiving relations by reason than it is with respect to perceiving ideas with a sense. This brings out two points. Firstly, reason cannot be a source of pleasure and pain; sense can for Hutcheson. His location of both the intuitionist and normative aspects of morality in one faculty, relies on the fact that a sense can for him both perceive ideas and feel pleasure and pain. Secondly, this explains why (although it perhaps does not excuse him) Hutcheson "neglects the possibility that obligation may be ultimate and unanalysable."<sup>23</sup> He does not neglect the fact that moral goodness is unanalysable; that the idea of moral goodness is simple is one of his central claims. The reason he can claim that moral ideas as perceived by a sense are simple, but can simultaneously assume that those perceived by reason must be analysable, lies in the fact that his theory of sense perception appears to allow him to locate the normative aspects of morality in simple ideas perceived by a sense. His theory of the nature of reason means that any moral ideas perceived by reason must be analysable into normative and rational content. This is not to defend Hutcheson on this point, but rather to show how deeply one is criticizing his theory when one questions the compatibility of the intuitionist and normative roles of the moral sense.<sup>24</sup>

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23. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 37-38.

24. Cf. above, chapter 3.

## v. Price's Criticisms of Hutcheson

### a. Introduction

In discussing Price's criticisms of Hutcheson, it is important first to establish those aspects of Hutcheson's moral theory with which Price agrees. Doing this will serve as an introduction to Price's theory, but more importantly, will also serve to bring out the differences between Price's debate with Hutcheson, and Hutcheson's debate with the earlier rationalists.

The most important point of agreement between Price and Hutcheson is that both claimed that some moral ideas are simple. The simplicity of moral ideas in Hutcheson's theory has already been discussed in a number of contexts throughout this thesis. Price's agreement with Hutcheson on this issue is quite explicit: "Tis a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, ..." (Review, p. 41).

If Price and Hutcheson agree that moral ideas are simple, and by implication, unanalysable, then it follows that the debate between them is not over the naturalistic fallacy (i.e. the reduction of moral ideas to non-moral ideas). As I tried to establish in section ii above, it was this fallacy which Hutcheson had accused the earlier rationalists of committing; with Price, one has a rationalist opponent of Hutcheson who is careful to avoid the error which had caused Hutcheson to prefer the moral sense to moral reason. This fact reopens the debate between the two schools on a different level.

But even if Price avoids the error of the earlier rationalists (as Hutcheson saw it), did Price agree that Hutcheson himself had

avoided it? In fact, Price is none too sure that Hutcheson had not committed this error by reducing moral ideas to pleasure and pain. This raises the question, which I discussed above in Chapter 3, of whether for Hutcheson moral ideas are a type of, or are accompanied by, pleasure and pain. On the first occasion in the 'Review' on which Price mentions Hutcheson, he interprets him as saying that moral ideas are forms of pleasure and pain. "Dr. Hutcheson, deduces our moral ideas from a moral sense; meaning by this sense, a power within us, different from reason, which renders certain actions pleasing and others displeasing to us" (Review, p. 13-14). But Price's considered opinion would seem to be not so much that Hutcheson reduces moral ideas to pleasure and pain, but that Hutcheson is confused over the matter. This is the same conclusion that I reached in the discussion above. The accusation of being confused on this point Price puts thus:

"It was, probably, in consequence of ... not carefully distinguishing between the discernment of the mind, and the sensations attending it in our moral perceptions; that the Author of the Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, was led to derive all our ideas of virtue from an implanted sense. Moral good and evil, he everywhere describes, by the effects accompanying the perception of them." (Review, p. 62-63)

There is a great deal of truth in this criticism of Hutcheson; I have already suggested that the reason Hutcheson prefers the sense to reason as the faculty of moral perception, is that his theory of sense perception allows him to locate both the perceptive and the normative aspects of morality in the moral sense.

Price's own view on this question is that reason intuits, or perceives, moral ideas, and that these are always accompanied by, but



distinct from, feelings of pleasure and pain. He is explicit on this point:

"It is true, some impressions of pleasure and pain, satisfaction or disgust, generally attend our perceptions of virtue and vice. But these are merely their effects and concomitants, and not the perceptions themselves, which ought no more to be confounded with them, than a particular truth... ought to be confounded with the pleasure that may attend the discovery of it. Some emotion or other accompanies, perhaps, all our perceptions; but more remarkably our perceptions of right and wrong." (Review, p. 44; cf. also p. 62)<sup>25</sup>

To summarize this point, Price and Hutcheson both think that some moral ideas are simple, but Price thinks Hutcheson might have been guilty of committing the naturalistic fallacy by reducing moral ideas to types of pleasure and pain. Price himself is always clear on the distinction between the intuition of moral ideas and the accompanying feelings of pleasure and pain.

Besides the simplicity of moral ideas, there are four other points of agreement between Hutcheson and Price which I think can be summarized briefly.

Firstly, Price agrees with Hutcheson that our perceptions of moral ideas are forced upon us; that is, that moral approval and disapproval are independent of our free-will or choice: "Some actions we all feel ourselves irresistibly determined to approve, and others to disapprove" (Review, p. 13).

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25. Two points must be made about the passage in the 'Inquiry' (p. 131) in which Hutcheson explicitly says that the ideas of good and evil are accompanied by, but not identical with, pleasure and pain. Firstly, this passage was only added to later editions, and so it is quite possible that Price did not have the relevant edition, and even if he had, the passage so tends against the drift of the rest of the 'Inquiry', that it would not be surprising if it were overlooked or ignored. Secondly, if the adding of that passage to later editions indicates that Hutcheson was becoming less confused on this point, then it should be noted that the corrections to the later editions of Hutcheson's works were made in the late 1730's, and that Price's 'Review' was not published until 1758; thus there is no possibility that Hutcheson's later thought was influenced by Price.

Secondly, Price agrees that our perceptions of moral ideas are immediate. "He (Hutcheson) has indeed well shewn, that we have a faculty determining us immediately to approve or disapprove actions, abstracted from all views of private advantage" (Review, p. 14). It is a very important implication of this that Price is not claiming that deductive reasoning, which is not immediate, is the source of moral ideas; rather he is saying that reason, besides performing deductions, can be the source of immediately perceived intuited ideas (cf. Review, p. 40).

Thirdly, although Price is not as explicit on this point as one might wish, he does not seem to want to claim that moral ideas are relations. I do not want to examine Price's text on this point in depth, I merely wish to assume that, even if Price is sometimes ambiguous, it is not unacceptable to view him as maintaining that the intuition of moral ideas is different from the perception of relations. This view has the support of Raphael, (cf. Review, p. xxxviii), although he also notes the questionable passages. Viewing Price in this manner has the effect of attributing to him a position different from that held by some of the earlier rationalists which Hutcheson had explicitly criticized (cf. above, ch. 6, sec. iv).

Finally, Price and Hutcheson both claim that the perception of moral ideas itself is not the source of moral error. They both attribute moral error to false beliefs, and to the mis-application of moral ideas caused by bad education, association of ideas, bias, etc. (cf. Review, p. 169-172). Price, however, does not seem to be aware of his agreement with Hutcheson on this point. He criticizes the moral sense philosophers for being unable to account for the unbiased

nature of correct moral judgements, and for being unable to explain moral error without throwing in doubt the veracity of the moral faculty itself (cf. Review, p. 211-212). But I have already examined how Hutcheson can explain moral error and the influence of the passions without attributing the error or the bias directly to the moral sense. He can do this because the perceptions of the moral sense presuppose non-moral judgements of the nature of the action, and it is these judgements which may be erroneous. For reasons which I will discuss below, Price does not take account of these prior non-moral judgements, and so maintains that for the moral sense philosophers, moral bias and error must be in the moral sense itself (cf. Review, p. 212). This criticism rests on a misunderstanding of Hutcheson; in fact, both Price and Hutcheson are in agreement that the source of moral error and bias is not in the perception of moral ideas.

b. Ideas of the Understanding

Having summarized the main points of agreement between Hutcheson and Price, I will now turn to Price's main criticism of the moral sense school. As Price sees it, the central fault of Hutcheson's theory is that it makes morality dependent on an arbitrary feature of human nature. Price wishes to maintain against Hutcheson that morality is objective and *necessary*; objective in the sense that the rightness of actions is a quality of the action itself independent of our perception of the action or its rightness; and necessary in the sense that the connexion between an action and its moral qualities is not dependent on human nature, nor, indeed, even on God's will. Price sees Hutcheson's failure to view morality as objective and necessary as being connected with the theory of the moral sense. In particular,

Price objects to Hutcheson's tendency to view the ideas perceived by the moral sense as analogous to the secondary qualities. All these points are brought out in the following passage:

"It is evident, he (Hutcheson) considered it (the moral sense) as the effect of a positive constitution of our minds, or as an implanted and arbitrary principle by which a relish is given us for certain moral objects and forms and aversion to others, similar to the relishes and aversions created by any of our other senses. In other words; our ideas of morality, if this account is right, have the same origin with our ideas of the sensible qualities of bodies, the harmony of sounds, or the beauties of painting or sculpture; that is, the mere good pleasure of our Maker adapting the mind and its organs in a particular manner to certain objects. Virtue (as those who embrace this scheme say) is an affair of taste. Moral right and wrong, signify nothing in the objects themselves to which they are applied, any more than agreeable and harsh; sweet and bitter; pleasant and painful; but only certain effects in us. ... 'Tis therefore, by this account, improper to say of an action, that it is right, in much the same sense that it is improper to say of an object of taste, that it is sweet; or of pain, that it is in fire." (Review, p. 14-15)

This passage brings out the fact that Price is criticizing Hutcheson for making morality dependent on our faculties, and hence not objective, and making those faculties dependent on God's will, and hence not necessary.

If one accepts Price's premise that morality is in fact objective and necessary, then this criticism is accurately applied to Hutcheson. I have discussed above<sup>26</sup> Hutcheson's admission that God could have created our moral sense differently; this is tantamount to admitting that morality is dependent on how human nature was made, and hence that it is neither objective nor necessary in Price's sense. Hutcheson's ploy of suggesting that God might have a moral sense similar to ours

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26. Cf. above, chapter 3.

will not do for Price because Price does not want to view morality as dependent on God's faculties. He specifically argues that morality is independent of God's will, and is only able to save his theological beliefs by making morality and all other absolute truth, not dependent on, but identical with, God's understanding. Thus for Price, morality is not dependent on God or any of his faculties in the way in which Hutcheson suggests that our moral sense might be dependent on a divine equivalent of our moral sense. The difference is that for Hutcheson, morality is dependent on something outside itself; for Price, morality is dependent only on itself, for absolute truth and God's understanding are the same thing. One can only conclude that Price's interpretation of Hutcheson is accurate on this point.

But even if this interpretation is right, the criticism will be applicable, as we have seen, only if Price can prove that moral knowledge is objective and necessary. Since by objective and necessary Price means that we can know facts which are not dependent on human nature, Price must prove that we can have knowledge independently of our senses. But to claim this is to question the empiricist's assumption that all our ideas are first perceived by our senses, and that we can have knowledge of nothing which is not first perceived by our senses. Price realizes that he must refute this central tenet of empiricism, and so he attempts to establish in his first chapter that our senses are not the only source of new simple ideas. He attempts to show that the faculty of reason itself can intuit new simple ideas. It becomes apparent as his argument proceeds that he also wishes to prove, and in fact must prove, that reason can intuit not only new ideas, but truths concerning those ideas as well. But

since Price accepts the empiricist's analysis of knowledge into atomistic ideas, he conducts the discussion in terms of the source of ideas; knowledge of truths seems to follow automatically for him.

Before attempting to prove that the faculty of reason, or the understanding, is the source of moral ideas, Price gives six arguments to prove that reason can be the source of ideas in general.<sup>27</sup> I will not examine these arguments separately because I accept Raphael's judgement that the only simple idea which Price has managed to establish as arising in the understanding is the idea of necessity.<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere Raphael suggests that the really contentious point between the empiricists and the rationalists is not so much the origin of simple ideas, but the problem of synthetic but necessary truths. With respect to the notion of cause, Raphael says: "He (Price) is concerned with the causal maxim, not with the idea of cause or power. In short, Price is really groping towards the problem of the synthetic a priori proposition."<sup>29</sup> Accepting this conclusion, the question is not so much why Price thinks that the understanding is the source of new simple ideas; but rather, why and how does the understanding have knowledge of non-deductive but necessary truths? As I mentioned, Price sets out to answer not the latter, but the former question. But I think from his discussion of the origins of ideas, a general argument for our knowing necessary truths can be constructed, and it is this argument that lies at the core of his attack on the moral sense school.

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27. Cf. Review, p. 17-40; Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 117-121.

28. Raphael, The Moral Sense, p. 126-127.

29. Review, p. xxi; Raphael's emphasis.

Price's account of how knowledge of necessary truth is possible is derived from Cudworth's theory of universals which he expounded in his Eternal and Immutable Morality. Passmore<sup>30</sup> goes so far as to say that Price's epistemology is simply a restatement of Cudworth's. Cudworth, it must be remembered, owes much to Plato; and Price acknowledges generously both of these sources. However, Hudson<sup>31</sup> claims that the Cartesian notion of clear and distinct ideas was as influential on Price as Cudworth's Platonism. I will not enter this debate, but I think that both the Platonic and Cartesian origins of Price's notion of ideas is a helpful background to bear in mind when discussing the following argument.

Essential to Price's views is his use of the word 'idea'. He discusses the word in two places (i.e. Review, p. 39 fn. and Note C p. 280-281), where he identifies four ways it has been used:

- 1) an idea is a mental image of something - this use is unwarrantable, he thinks.
- 2) an idea may signify sensation itself - this he thinks is "very unwarrantable".

3) an idea is "the immediate object of the mind in thinking." (Review, p. 39 fn.) This is the use he attributes to Hume, and he elsewhere adds "Mr. Hume makes the immediate object of the mind in perception to be the same with perception itself, and thus annihilates all external existence." (Review, p. 280, Note C). Price is, in fact, accusing Hume of thinking that ideas are entities or things which are in the mind when the mind perceives anything. If there is an external

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30. Hudson, Reason and Right, p. 12.

31. Hudson, New Studies in Ethics, p. 254.

world, then these ideas may be representations of, or images of, things in that world; but we can never know the external world directly on this theory. So, viewing ideas as entities which may or may not represent, necessarily leads to scepticism.

"It (the word 'idea') is further used to signify the immediate object of the mind in thinking. This sense of an idea is derived from the notion that when we think of any object, there is something immediately present to the mind which it perceives and contemplates. But what is this? - Shall we call it a representation or image of the object? This, I think, is improper language." (Review, p. 39, fn.)

In other words, Price accuses the empiricists of viewing ideas as entities; which, if they are images, raises the problem of what they are images of, and how we can know the original. It is the impossibility of answering this question that Price thinks leads to Humean scepticism:

"It should be observed that I have all along endeavoured to avoid speaking of an idea as an image in the mind of the object we think of. It is difficult not to fall sometimes into language of this kind; but it may be misunderstood. A writer of deep reflexion (i.e. Thomas Reid) has charged it with laying the foundation of all modern scepticism." (Review, p. 39, fn.)

4) an idea is not an entity, but an action of the mind.

The word 'idea' he says, "is also used to signify the mind's conception or apprehension of any object. This, I think, is its most just and proper sense" (Review, p. 39, fn.). In other words, the mind does not perceive ideas; they are not objects of thought; rather they are the act of perceiving something.

This discussion of the uses of the word 'idea' requires some comment; in particular, it must be applied to Hutcheson's use of the word. Hutcheson fails to distinguish between particular acts of



perceiving, and what the perception is of, or the content of perceptions. In Price's list of the various uses of the word 'idea' as I have given it above, the distinction between uses 3) and 4) involves the distinction between the perception of ideas and the content of ideas. It would appear that Price is accusing the empiricists of using a concept of idea with which these two aspects of perception cannot be distinguished. For the empiricist, he says, and there is a great deal of truth in the accusation, ideas are entities, so that on each occurrence of an idea, the idea itself is present in the mind; in other words, the perception of the idea merely is the idea. Hence there is no distinction between the act of perceiving and the idea itself. This is the same as is normally the case with physical objects and the occurrence of those objects - there is no difference between this table and the occurrence of this table. If ideas are viewed in this manner, and Hutcheson seems so to view them, it means that although ideas may resemble one another, two different perceptions are in fact the occurrences of two different ideas. This is true if both the ideas are in the same mind, or in two different minds; and it implies that two people can never have the same idea. This is the result of viewing ideas as entities; consider again the analogy with physical objects; this table and that table may resemble one another, but they are, and always will be two different tables. This view of ideas leaves open the question of whether resembling ideas resemble one another because they are both images of the same thing, but it is precisely this question of whether ideas are images which Price thinks cannot be answered; hence this view must lead to scepticism.

Price's alternative to viewing ideas as entities of the mind is

quite straightforward; he wishes to call the act of perceiving, or conceiving, 'the idea', and what is perceived 'the object of the idea'. On this scheme the idea is an action or event, not an entity. The distinction corresponds to, but is not the same as (for reasons I will give below), the distinction I have drawn between the perception of ideas (which correspond to Price's ideas), and the content of ideas (which correspond to Price's objects of ideas). The advantage of drawing this sort of distinction is that one can now account for the phenomenon of two people, or the same person at two different times, having two ideas which in common usage would be said to be the same idea. There is a sense in which two people have the same idea if they are both considering, for example, equilateral triangles. The empiricist can only account for this by saying that they are two different but resembling ideas. Price can say that although the idea (i.e. the act of perceiving), is different for they are in two different minds, the object of the idea (or, as I would say, the content of the idea), is the same in both cases. That this is the reason behind Price's distinction is brought out in the footnote, p. 39, when he says: "When millions of intellects contemplate the equality of every angle in a semicircle to a right angle, have they not all the same object in view?"

Having thus proposed an alternative use of the word 'idea' to the empiricists', and having given a reason for it in the form of being able to describe better the phenomenon of various occurrences of what appear to be the same idea, Price tries to draw directly the conclusion which is his purpose in discussing this question. From his definition of ideas, Price concludes that an idea must be the mind's

perception of some-thing; that is, he assumes that the objects of ideas are entities which exist independently of the perception of them. And because on his theory different people, and God as well, can perceive, or have ideas of, the same objects, he concludes that the objects of ideas exist not only independently of the perception of them, but independently of all perceivers as well. Thus Price has arrived at the conclusion that the human mind has direct access to objectively existing entities. The next and final step in the argument relies on Price's concept of necessity being that anything which is not dependent on the contingent construction of the perceivers' faculties, must be necessary. Hence if the mind has direct access to objective entities, then it has access to non-contingent, or necessary entities, and hence to necessary truth.

In reading the 'Review', one gets the impression that this last conclusion follows from a definition of ideas which appears quite arbitrary; hence the conclusion appears arbitrary. I have done my best to connect Price's use of the word 'idea' to his criticism of empiricism in an attempt to show that Price has at least some reason for his concept of ideas as the activity of perceiving independently existing entities. But now the question arises as to whether Price's argument is valid. Does drawing the distinction between perception and what is perceived imply that the object of perception is objective? I can see no reason to think that it does. The fact that two minds can both conceive of the same thing, for example unicorns, does not imply that unicorns exist independently of the conception of them. They certainly do not exist in the normal sense. Price was misled, I think, by talking in terms of the object of ideas; if he

had used a phrase like 'content of ideas' perhaps he would have realized his error.

The difficulty with Price's conclusion can best be seen if one tries to establish what are the objects of perception. In the case of the physical world, he wants to claim that they are physical objects. This amounts to the sensible claim that physical objects can be the objects of perception. But in the case of ideas which are not of matter (and Price adds spirit) and their qualities, what are the objects of perception? A list of such objects can be abstracted from Price's text; they include concepts of material objectivity such as solidity and impenetrability, activity, substance, and accident; time and space; power and causation, number, proportion, diversity, and equality; and, of course, right, wrong, and obligation. The objects of these ideas are objective and necessary, and we have direct access to them. These objects I will henceforth refer to as 'Price-onic' entities. That we can have knowledge of necessary truths about these entities, is stated in the passage where Price draws the distinction between the two types of ideas:

"An idea would thus always imply something distinct from itself which is its object; and the proper division of our ideas would be, according to their different objects, into those whose objects are matter and spirit and their qualities, the general affections of all things, and necessary truth."  
(Review, p. 39, fn.)

One of the central problems of Price's theory lies in the fact that ideas can be either of matter, or of Price-onic entities. Earlier in the 'Review' he had argued at length that the ideas which are perceived by the senses (i.e. matter and its qualities) are different from those perceived by the understanding (i.e. Price-onic

entities). The differences between the senses and the understanding he summarizes as follows:

"In a word, it appears that sense and understanding are faculties of the soul totally different: The one being conversant only about particulars; the other about universals: The one not discerning, but suffering; the other not suffering, but discerning; and signifying the soul's power of surveying and examining all things, in order to judge of them:"  
(Review, p. 21)

This, I think, is an admirable analysis of several aspects of knowledge. From these differences between sensation and the understanding, Price concludes that the understanding has knowledge of necessary truths, and that the senses can provide knowledge of particular and contingent truths. But a problem arises, if I am right, in that the argument for the necessity of the knowledge provided by the understanding rests on Price's concept of ideas. If the objectivity of Price-onic ideas, and the necessity of the connexions between them is founded on the fact that ideas imply something objective which is perceived, then why does this argument not apply to the ideas of the senses? The objects of sensory ideas, i.e. material objects, are objective, for they exist independently of us, but why are their connexions not necessary? This problem arises because Price thinks he needs to establish that the understanding is the source of simple ideas and seems to think that our knowledge of necessary truths follows therefrom; whereas in fact what he ought to be establishing is that the understanding has knowledge of necessary truths.

In summary, I think Price has made two errors. Firstly, he assumes that the objectivity of ideas follows from the distinction between a particular perception of an idea, and what the idea is of.

In fact, all that follows from this distinction is that the content of ideas is in some sense re-identifiable; that is, that two perceptions of an idea can be identified as being of the same thing. Positing the objective existence of the objects of ideas leads to a heaven full of Price-onic entities. (Actually, for Price it is not a heaven which is full of these entities, but rather God's understanding; but I do not think that Price's theological views will solve the problems I am raising.)

Secondly, Price assumes that the connexions between Price-onic entities are necessary and that having direct access to these entities guarantees that the mind has access to necessary truths. The possibility that the mind connects the idea intuited by the understanding according to the mind's construction did not occur to him. He has not proved that the empiricist's favourite principle, the association of ideas, does not apply to the ideas of the understanding as well as to those of the senses.

#### c. Moral Ideas

So far I have dealt very little with the application of Price's views to morality. This application is, in fact, quite straightforward. It will be remembered that Price's main criticism of the moral sense was that it made morality contingent and dependent on human nature. He has now established, he thinks, that the mind has access to necessary truths. He has merely to prove that our ideas of moral right and wrong arise in the understanding and not in a sense, and he has provided for the necessity that he believes is inherent in morality. This project, of course, collapses if I am right in claiming that Price

has failed to show that the understanding has access to necessary truth.

To prove that moral ideas arise first in the understanding, and hence can give necessary knowledge, Price gives the following five arguments.

1) "First, observe, that it implies no absurdity, but evidently may be true. It is undeniable, that many of our ideas are derived from our intuition of truth, or the discernment of the nature of things by the understanding. This therefore may be the source of our moral ideas" (Review, p. 41). He goes on to point out that "nothing has been offered that has any tendency to prove the contrary", (Review, p. 42). Hutcheson, he notes, has merely assumed that all ideas are perceived first by the senses. This, of course, is not actually an argument, but merely a preparation for the following. However, he is right in claiming that Hutcheson never argued against the sort of rationalist position which Price is advocating; what Hutcheson was arguing against has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

2) Secondly, Price appeals to common sense and introspection. I do not think this appeal helpful; firstly, because there seem to be differences in the conclusions arrived at by introspection, (Hume, after all, appealed to introspection to support the opposite conclusion); secondly, because moral emotions and moral judgements are so closely entwined that mere introspection is not likely to disentangle them.

3) Price's third argument is that if moral ideas are only sensations, then they can only be applicable to actions in the way that secondary qualities are applicable to bodies; since the secondary

qualities are by general consensus not in the body, (or, as Price phrases it, are not compatible with it), then moral qualities are not in, or compatible with, actions. But this, he thinks, is absurd. The argument is fair, I think, so long as the moral sense philosophers compare moral ideas to feelings, as I think Hutcheson tended to; but if the moral sense philosopher compares them with sense perception, especially with our perception of primary qualities, then I do not think that the argument is damaging. Hutcheson, however, had rejected the analogy with the primary qualities, so the argument is applicable to him. This argument also presupposes Price's notion that morality must inhere in, or be compatible with, actions, a premise which is discussed below.

4) Fourthly, Price argues that if moral concepts are sensations, then we cannot make moral mistakes, since we cannot be in error about our own sensations. This is fair enough, but only against moral sense theories which do not specify that one has to be normal, in a normal state, and/or objective, or which do not describe an alternative source of moral error, which Hutcheson does. For Hutcheson, the moral sense does not err, so this objection does not apply to his theory. Another problem with this objection is that it is not clear how Price himself avoids a similar argument against his own theory. Although he gives a marvellous analysis of moral error in particular circumstances, he does maintain that necessary truth can be known with certainty. If there is a problem about not being able to err about sensations, then there is a similar problem about our not being able to err in our intuition of necessary moral truths.

5) Finally, Price argues that feelings and sensations vary



according to the situation of the individual, but that morality is unchanging. Hutcheson, however, has been able to provide an account of the influence of the passions on our views of actions, without thereby suggesting that the moral sense is unreliable. As I have explained elsewhere, the passions can bias our non-moral beliefs about the action, but the moral sense always reacts correctly to the action as it is conceived.

Of the five arguments, therefore, the only one which Hutcheson would not be able to answer on his moral sense theory is the third. And that argument assumes that rightness must inhere in actions in a fashion different from the fashion in which secondary qualities inhere in material objects. In the next section, I will argue that this assumption is questionable and that Price's theory can account for this inherence no better than Hutcheson's. From the separate consideration of the arguments, I conclude that Price cannot prove that right and wrong are ideas of the understanding and not of sense.

#### d. Subsequent Ideas

Price differs from Hutcheson in locating morality in the action and not in the motive from which the action was done; this point I will discuss in the next section. But he also disagrees with Hutcheson in that his view of the nature of the connexion between virtue and the action, is different from Hutcheson's view of the connexion between virtue and the motive. Price thinks that this connexion for Hutcheson is merely contingent; that the only connexion between motives and morality for Hutcheson lies in the fact that our faculty of the moral sense reacts in the way that it does; and that the fact that it reacts in this way and not another was an arbitrary

choice on God's part. Price, on the other hand, wishes to maintain that the connexion between the action and the action's moral qualities is a necessary one. That this connexion is not contingent for Price in the same way that it is for Hutcheson follows immediately from the fact that for Price moral qualities are objective and independent of the observer. However, Price's argument that moral qualities are objectives does not in itself answer the question of how moral qualities inhere in the action; it merely proves that these qualities are not dependent on the observer. That Price wishes to maintain that moral qualities are somehow properties of actions, can be seen from numerous passages throughout the 'Review'; this, for example, is typical:

"In the same manner (i.e. introspection) may we satisfy ourselves concerning the origin of the idea of right: For have we not a like consciousness, that we discern the one (i.e. right), as well as the other (i.e. equality), in certain objects? ... Would not a being purely intelligent, having happiness within his reach, approve of securing it for himself? Would not he think this right; and would it not be right? When we contemplate the happiness of a species, or of a world, and pronounce concerning the actions of reasonable beings which promote it, that they are right; is this judging erroneously? Are not such actions really right?" (Review, p. 44-45. View emphasis as added by present writer.)

But Price is less clear on the question of how moral qualities inhere in actions than he is on the fact that they do. In fact, his suggestions on this question are confined to one or two passages. Particularly relevant is his discussion of subsequent ideas. This passage, in its entirety reads thus:

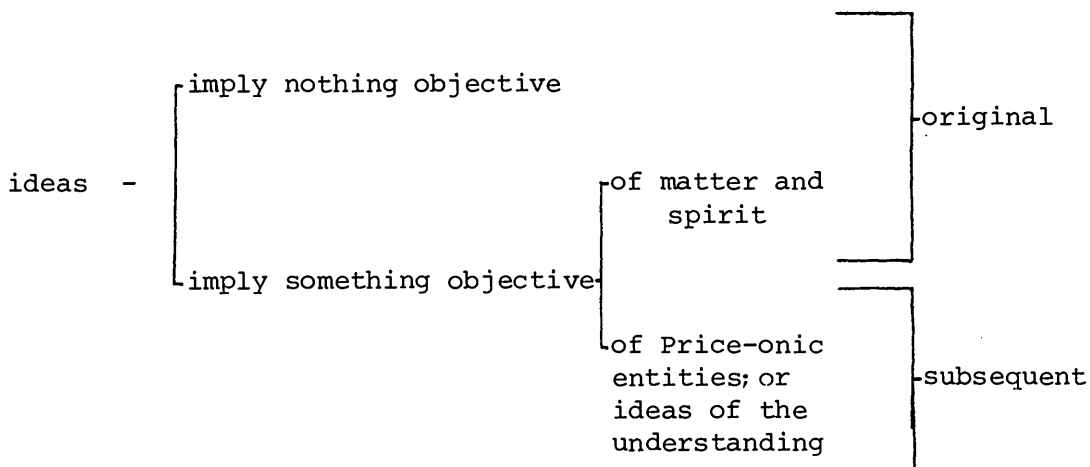
"'Tis obvious, that the ideas (of the understanding) presuppose certain subjects of contemplation, of whose natures, connexions, and qualities they are perceptions. And, therefore, the division of all our simple ideas into original and subsequent ones may not, perhaps, be improper. The former are conveyed to us immediately by our organs of sense,

and our reflection upon ourselves. The latter presuppose other ideas, and arise from the perception of their natures and relations."  
(Review, p. 38)

Price then abruptly drops this line of thought and switches to another. He now divides ideas into "First, ... those implying nothing real without the mind;" and "Secondly, ... those which denote something distinct from sensation; and imply real and independent existence and truth." (Review, p. 38). This second group he now sub-divides into two further groups; those which "denote the real properties of external objects, and the actions and passions of the mind: And those, which I have described as derived immediately from intelligence." (Review, p. 38). The former are our ideas of material and spiritual substances; the latter are our ideas of what I earlier called Price-onic entities. The next paragraph in the text, however, is important for it identifies these ideas of the understanding as subsequent ideas, although that phrase is not actually used:

"After the mind, from whatever possible causes, has been furnished with ideas of any objects, they become themselves objects to our intellective faculty; from whence arises a new set of ideas, which are the perceptions of this faculty. Previously to this, whatever ideas we may be furnished with, nothing is understood. Whatever subjects of knowledge there may be in the mind, nothing is known." (Review, p. 39)

Taking these two passages as a whole, one arrives at the following classification of ideas, best, I think, presented as a table:



The importance of this classification is that it implies, although Price does not explicitly draw out this implication, that subsequent ideas are a subgroup of those ideas which "imply real and independent truth and existence."

The question which I was discussing before I gave this classification of ideas was the question of how moral qualities inhere in actions. It has been suggested that Price's notion of subsequent ideas is a possible type of answer to this question. In his introduction to the 'Review', Raphael makes this comment, (Raphael's word 'consequential' corresponds to Price's word 'subsequent'):

"I suggest that this is the position of the concept of good, when used non-naturalistically, and that if good, thus used, is a 'consequential' characteristic, it is misleading to add that it is simple. Of course it is still true that a consequential characteristic, i.e. one which only comes into existence if entailed by other characteristics, must be discerned by the understanding, for it is the understanding that discerns entailments."<sup>32</sup>

Earlier, Raphael had said: "If my comments on his critique of empiricism are sound, he would do better to show that moral ideas are either (a) relations, or (b) 'consequential' or 'subsequent' ideas."<sup>33</sup> The suggestion, in other words, is that moral ideas are connected with certain actions by the fact that they are entailed by the non-moral characteristics of those actions. I do not wish to dispute Raphael's suggestion that this may in fact be the case; rather I want to draw out the implications of this theory for Price's view of morality. And the implications of subsequent ideas for Price are brought out by comparing the subsequent - original idea distinction with Price's other classification of ideas, (which for some reason

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32. Review, p. xxvii.

33. Review, p. xxv.

Raphael dismisses as not "particularly clear or helpful").<sup>34</sup> This second classification makes it clear that subsequent ideas are ideas of the understanding, and hence imply an objective Price-onic entity existing independently of the perceiver. The reason moral qualities are perceived as necessarily entailed by the action lies in the fact that these qualities exist objectively and are objectively related, somehow, to the action. And it is the nature of this objective relation of the objective Price-onic entity to the objective action which Price needs to establish. The notion of subsequent ideas cannot answer this question, because for Price the subsequent or entailed nature of moral ideas is dependent on the objective and necessary nature of the ideas of the understanding. (It is, by the way, at the point in the text where he is discussing subsequent ideas, that he has the long footnote and the reference to Note C which are crucial for his argument about the objective and necessary nature of the ideas of the understanding.) The conclusion, therefore, which I wish to draw is that Price's only suggestion as to the nature of the relation between moral qualities and actions does not, in fact, contribute anything to answering the question.

This problem in Price's theory becomes apparent if one compares his thinking to that of Hutcheson. It will be remembered that Price's main criticism of Hutcheson was that the moral sense made morality depend on human nature. Price's alternative was to propose that moral qualities were objective and necessary, and somehow in the action, not just in the nature of our perception of the action. I have now argued that the suggestion of subsequent ideas is based on

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34. Review, p. xxiii.

this claim that morality is objective and necessary. If moral qualities did not inhere in the action, then the fact that they are entailed by the action might be an adequate answer to the question of the relation between actions and their moral attributes. This point will be clearer if I emphasize this very important fact: to wit, that for Hutcheson as well moral ideas are in a sense subsequent. I have argued at length above that for Hutcheson moral ideas only arise in the moral sense if one has a conception of the nature of the action first, and that this conception is established by the faculty of reason. This corresponds exactly to Price's criterion that subsequent ideas "presuppose other ideas, and arise from the perception of their natures and relations." (Review, p. 38). One can only conclude from this that it is not the question of moral ideas being subsequent about which Price and Hutcheson disagree.

It could be replied to this that for Hutcheson moral ideas are psychologically subsequent, that is, that it is just a matter of psychological fact that they arise upon our considering an action; whereas for Price, moral ideas are logically subsequent, that they are logically entailed by the nature of the actions, and that hence reason alone is able to establish the connexion between actions and moral ideas. This, I think, is a more accurate way of stating the difference between Hutcheson and Price on this point. But to say that the connexion is logical for Price is either to say that the connexion is necessary in the sense of necessary which includes truths about Price-onic entities, or it is to say that the connexion is such that moral qualities can be deduced from non-moral ones. The first possibility is merely to conclude again that Price's notion of

subsequent ideas presupposes his claim that there is a necessary connexion between actions and their moral attributes. The second possibility, that is the claim that the notion of subsequent ideas is logical in a sense implying that they can be deduced from the prior ideas, suggests that one can derive an ought from an is, a procedure which Hume has argued persuasively against. But whatever the merits of Hume's argument, it is clear that Price does not want to claim that moral ideas are logically deducible from the non-moral characteristics of actions, for he is emphatic that reason's role in intuiting moral ideas is different from reason's role in performing deductions. He criticizes the empiricist for limiting the role of reason to deduction only. Therefore, it is clear that Price wants to claim that his notion of subsequent ideas is different from either psychological succession or logical deduction. Once again we return to the fact that Price's notion of necessity is prior to his notion of subsequence. The argument for his notion of necessity and its merits has already been discussed. The conclusion I wish to emphasize here is that the concept of subsequent ideas cannot be used to explain the notion of necessity, for subsequence in Price's sense presupposes Price's concept of necessity.

e. The Motive for Virtuous Actions

Price does not confine his criticism of Hutcheson to criticism of the moral sense as the source of moral ideas. He also attacks other aspects of Hutcheson's moral philosophy. One of the main claims with which Price disagrees is Hutcheson's claim that the morality of an action is dependent on the motive from which the action was done. Price wishes to claim that actions are themselves

inherently either right or wrong, and that the motive from which the action was done is irrelevant to the morality of that action. This does not, of course, mean that the motive is irrelevant in considering the moral worth of the agent; for Price, the virtue of the agent and the virtue of the action are two different concepts:

"One of these may, perhaps, very properly be called the virtue of the action, in contradistinction from the other, which may be called the virtue of the agent. To the former, no particular intention is requisite; for what is objectively right, may be done from any motive good or bad; and, therefore, from hence alone, no merit is communicated to the agent; nay, it is consistent with the greatest guilt. On the contrary, to the other the particular intention is what is most essential." (Review, p. 184)

Price explicitly recognizes Hutcheson's position on this point, although he does not mention him by name in this passage. The same passage also notes the connexion between the theory that the virtue of actions derives from the motive, and the theory of the moral sense. Furthermore, it notes the problem Hutcheson faces with respect to how the moral sense can motivate. Price thinks this problem insoluble, and that its insolubility is a reason for rejecting the moral sense. The pertinent passage reads as follows:

"I know, indeed, that according to the account some have given of virtue, it presupposes an intention in the agent different from that to itself, because, according to this account, it denotes only the emotion arising in us upon observing actions flowing from certain motives and affections, and, in the original constitution of our natures, is applicable alike to actions flowing from any motives. Were this account true, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that a sense of virtue and duty, or any regard to moral good, can ever influence to action. But this consequence cannot be regarded by one who believes not the opinion which implies it; nor is it with me a small objection to this opinion, that such a consequence arises from it." (Review, p. 189)



This passage clearly indicates that Price recognizes the paradox involved in a sense of duty being the motive for virtuous actions on a theory which locates the virtue of actions in the motive from which those actions are done. However, the claim advanced in this passage that it is impossible that "a sense of virtue and duty, or any regard to moral good, can ever influence to action," clearly indicates that Price has missed or ignored Hutcheson's complicated explanation of how the moral sense influences actions. In fact, Price elsewhere notes Hutcheson's theory of the desire of desires, but there he seems to suggest that the notion does not make much sense; he asks rhetorically: if moral excellence means "having and exercising an extensive and ardent benevolence; how can the desire of it be different from benevolence? How can it be, as Dr. Hutcheson says it is, in another order of affections?" (Review, p. 216, fn.). Hutcheson's explanation of desires of desires has been explained above in Chapter 5, and need not be re-examined here. Price has merely noted the problem; he has not criticized Hutcheson's solution of it.

But aside from the problem of a sense of duty motivating, what are the merits of Price's contention that the motive of an action is irrelevant to that action's morality? The fact that in the above quoted long passage Price thinks that Hutcheson's position on this question follows from Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense, indicates that Price's argument for his position will probably derive from his theory that moral ideas are intuited by the understanding. And this is in fact the case; it is from the objective necessity of moral truth that Price argues that moral qualities are inherent in the action, not in the motive. In fact, Price does not so much argue as assume

that if virtue is an objective quality of actions which is independent of the observer, then this quality must inhere in the action itself, and not in some aspect of the action such as its motive. This is a fallacious assumption, for the fact that the qualities of good and evil are independent of the observer does not imply that these qualities inhere in the action rather than the motive.

Price's comments on the question of whether motives or actions are properly said to be good and evil, require another comment; namely, that his distinction between the virtue of the agent and the virtue of the action need not trouble Hutcheson. Hutcheson can draw this distinction if he wishes, but it is unimportant on his theory for both the virtue of the action and the virtue of the agent derive from the virtue of the motive from which the agent did the action.

Hutcheson cannot in fact draw Price's other distinction; namely the distinction between actual and practical virtue. Actual virtue is the virtue which in fact inheres in the action; practical virtue is the virtue which would inhere in the action if the action were as the agent understood it, noting that the agent, through no fault of his own, may not understand the action as it actually is. Moral agents have an obligation to do the actions they see as best, providing that they have made adequate efforts to acquaint themselves with the actual nature of the actions as best they can. For Hutcheson, since when an agent is deciding on possible actions he has direct access to the motive from which he would do the various actions, then he has direct access to that aspect of the actions from which morality derives. Thus the agent is in a position to understand the actual virtue of the action, and hence there is no distinction between actual and practical

virtue for Hutcheson. This fact, of course, does not exempt the agent from making due effort to find out the consequences of his actions, or from carefully considering his motive before he acts. But I cannot see how the impossibility of drawing this distinction is in itself an objection to Hutcheson's theory. It is perhaps also interesting to note that this distinction could be drawn on Hutcheson's theory if, as is often now held to be the case, an agent does not have direct and accurate knowledge of his own motives.

Price's theory clearly does not encounter the paradox of the knowledge of virtuous actions not being the motive for virtuous actions. Hutcheson and Hume had this problem only because they located the virtue of actions in the action's motives. Since, for Price, the action is virtuous or vicious independently of the motive from which it was done, there is no problem in virtuous actions being motivated by the desire to do virtuous actions. The desire to fulfil one's obligations, or to do one's duty, can be the motive for good acts. And this is in fact what Price wishes to claim, a point which he makes repeatedly. This sentence is typical:

"In further explaining and proving what I have now in view, it will be proper to shew, 'that the perception of right and wrong does excite to action, and is alone a sufficient principle of action;' (Review, p. 185)

Furthermore, Price not only wishes to claim that a regard to duty can motivate virtuous actions, he also wishes to claim that this is the only motive which reflects virtue on the agent:

"What denominates an agent virtuous, and entitles him to praise, is his acting from a regard to goodness and right." (Review, p. 123)

But although Price has avoided the logical paradox that troubled Hutcheson, he is faced with another problem which he must solve if his criticism of Hutcheson on this point is to have any weight. Hutcheson had claimed that all actions must be motivated by a desire, and that all desires are caused by beliefs about possible pleasures and pain. This contention was at the centre of his theory of motivation from which he had drawn the conclusion that reason alone cannot motivate action. This conclusion he had used against the rationalists. Price has argued that we have a desire to do virtuous actions because they are virtuous. But it will be remembered that Price has also carefully separated moral ideas from all pleasure and pain that may accompany them. But if moral ideas themselves are not pleasant or painful, and if Hutcheson is right that all desires are caused by a belief about possible future pleasure and pain, how can knowledge of virtue and vice give rise to the desire to do virtuous actions? If Price is to claim that a desire to do virtuous actions because they are virtuous can motivate, he must refute Hutcheson's claim that all desires involve beliefs about possible pleasures and pains. If pleasure and pain are sensations, as both Hutcheson and Price agree, Price can refute Hutcheson on this point if he can prove that reason itself can generate desires. This is a conclusion which Hutcheson had denied but it is the conclusion which Price thinks he can prove. He has, in fact, two arguments for this conclusion; both of them, I think, are fallacious.

The first argument is that there is a necessary connexion between certain ideas, such as happiness, and the idea of desiring or pursuing that end. Since this is a necessary connexion, it can be perceived

by reason, and a purely rational being can conclude that certain ends are worth pursuing. Price assumes that once a purely rational being has reached this conclusion, he will be motivated into action to obtain that end. Price presents this argument first with respect to the agent pursuing his own happiness, (Review, p. 70), and then extends it to prove that it also applies to the happiness of others; that is, that there can be a purely rational benevolence (Review, p. 70-71, also p. 191). The first step in this argument reads thus:

"The desire of happiness for ourselves, certainly arises not from instinct. The full and adequate account of it, is, the nature of happiness. It is impossible, but that creatures capable of pleasant and painful sensations, should love and chuse the one, and dislike and avoid the other. No being, who knows what happiness and misery are, can be supposed indifferent to them, without a plain contradiction. Pain is not a possible object of desire; nor happiness, of aversion. ....

From hence I infer, that it is by no means, in general, an absurd method of explaining our affections (i.e. desires), to derive them from the natures of things and of beings.... To the preference and desire of private happiness by all beings, nothing more is requisite than to know what it is." (Review, p. 70)

This part of the argument is not, I think, fallacious, but it does not prove what Price thinks it proves. He should be proving that certain ends can be desired and that we can have a motive for pursuing them independently of all instinctive and non-rational desires. Since happiness is simply the name given to any state of an agent which that agent desires, what he has in fact proved is that there is a logical connexion between a desire and the end desired. This is no doubt true, but seeing this does not make the desire purely rational, for the connexion presupposes an end which is desired. And this is precisely what Hutcheson had claimed must be non-rational.

I do not think Price fares much better on the second stage of this argument. The relevant passage reads as follows:

"Let us, again, put the case of a being purely reasonable. It is evident, that (though by supposition void of implanted byasses) he would not want all principles of action, and all inclinations. It has been shewn he would perceive virtue, and possess affection to it, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge. The nature of happiness also would engage him to chuse and desire it for himself. And is it credible that, at the same time, he would be necessarily indifferent about it for others? Can it be supposed to have that in it, which would determine him to seek it for himself; and yet to have nothing in it, which could engage him to approve of it for others? Would the nature of things, upon this supposition, be consistent? Would he not be capable of seeing, that the happiness of others is to them as important as his is to him; and that it is in itself equally valuable and desirable, whoever possesses it? (Review, p. 70-71; cf. also p. 191)

This argument, in summary, is that if the connexion between happiness and desire is necessary in one agent, then it is necessarily connected in all. Therefore, the pursuit of happiness is rational regardless of whose happiness is pursued by whom. Raphael remarks of this argument that it "seems to come dangerously near the fallacy of deducing 'desirable' from 'desired'".<sup>35</sup> More accurately, I think it is the fallacy of arguing that since everyone has a motive for pursuing the ends they desire, then I must have a motive for pursuing those ends as well. But this is fallacious, for I may not desire the same ends. I only have a motive for pursuing the ends someone desires if I desire those ends as well.

Price's second argument to prove that desires can be purely rational is equally fallacious. Price draws the distinction between

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35. Review, p. xxxiv.

'affections' on the one hand, and 'passions' or 'appetites' on the other. His terminology on this point, however, is confusing in a thesis on Hutcheson, for the distinction is almost exactly the same as that which Hutcheson draws between 'desires' on the one hand, and 'passions' and 'appetites' on the other. Hutcheson uses the word 'affection' differently from Price. To keep this matter straight, I will call Price's 'affections' by Hutcheson's term 'desire'. The passions, or appetites, or instincts, are the same for both. For Price, desires involve the use of reason; from this he concludes that they are purely rational. Raphael sums up this argument thus:

"Anything that involves reason is, for him, a part of necessary truth. Thus his distinction between affections (desires) and passions implies that the former are necessary and would be possessed by any rational being, while the latter are contingent."<sup>36</sup>

But desires for Hutcheson also involve reason, for they presuppose beliefs about possible future pleasures and pains, and these beliefs are necessarily the domain of reason. Price does not explain why desires involve reason, but if they involve it in the way that they do for Hutcheson, then Price has committed the fallacy of thinking that that which involves reason is totally rational. Hutcheson, in fact, would accept that desires involve reason, but he would deny that they are therefore necessary in a totally rational creature. If Price wishes to maintain that desires involve reason in a fashion more substantial than that which distinguishes them from the appetites, then I think the only thing he could have had in mind is the notion of rational desires I outlined in the previous argument; and that argument I have already found fallacious.

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36. Review, p. xxxiii.

Perhaps this second argument would not be important if it had not led Price into criticizing Hutcheson on a point in a way which Hutcheson did not deserve. Price notes that

"Actions proceeding from universal, calm, and dispassionate benevolence, are by all esteemed more virtuous and amiable than actions producing equal or greater moments of good, directed to those to whom nature has more particularly linked us, and arising from kind determinations in our minds which are more confined and urgent."  
(Review, p. 192)

Hutcheson would, of course, whole-heartedly agree with this. But Price then goes on to claim that this sentiment is inconsistent with locating virtue in non-rational desires, which Hutcheson does because for him all desires are non-rational. Price says:

"These facts cannot be explained consistently with the notion, that virtue consists in acting from kind affections which cannot be derived from intelligence, and are incapable, in their immediate exercise, of being attended with any influence from it. For why then should not the virtue be greatest where the kind impulse is strongest?" (Review, p. 192)

This seems again to make the error of supposing that that which has non-rational elements must be totally non-rational. In fact, for Hutcheson, calm, universal desires necessarily involve more rational consideration than more violent and particular desires; this is why he thinks it acceptable to call calm desires 'reasonable'. But this I have explained earlier.<sup>37</sup> Price seems to have been mistaken in his criticism of Hutcheson on this point.

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37. Cf. above, chapter 2, section iii-e.



## 7. The Development of Hutcheson's Philosophy

In his book on Hutcheson's life and philosophy, William Scott divides his discussion of the latter topic into four chapters, one dealing with each stage of Hutcheson's philosophical development as Scott interpreted it. The notion of development underlies the entirety of Scott's presentation, a point which is made obvious by the fact that the title of each chapter begins "Hutcheson's Philosophy. First form, ...", "Hutcheson's Philosophy, Second form, ...", etc. In comparison, my presentation has not so much emphasized the development of Hutcheson's thought. Rather it has tried to present it as a coherent and inter-related whole, although, of course, throughout this thesis I have repeatedly had occasion to refer to changes which Hutcheson made in his ideas. There are, I think, two reasons for Scott's emphasizing Hutcheson's development more than I do. Firstly, I have concentrated my attention on the first two of Hutcheson's books; Scott has dealt in succession with all four. The present chapter will to some extent correct this bias in my thesis, for it deals in the main with the two later works of Hutcheson's. Secondly, and more importantly, there is a difference in emphasis between Scott's exposition of Hutcheson's thought, and my own. Scott tends to discuss Hutcheson's ideals; that is, he is interested in what, at each stage in his life, Hutcheson conceived as the nature of the virtuous man.<sup>1</sup> This ideal of the virtuous man changed remarkably in each of Hutcheson's four expositions of his views, and so any discussion of this aspect of Hutcheson's thought will

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1. This, of course, is not Scott's only interest in these chapters, but it is one of the main ones.

necessarily tend to emphasize development. I have, on the other hand, been concerned mainly with Hutcheson's analysis of human nature, and with the connexion between this analysis and his ideas on the nature of morality. I have concentrated on such topics as the moral sense, the nature of desires, including benevolence, and the problem of motivation. And although Hutcheson changed his mind on various aspects of these topics, the changes in these views are not as striking as the changes in his general concept of the virtuous man. Furthermore, as I will attempt to show in this chapter, his later views on these topics tend to be implied in his earlier views, thus making the changes more obvious and understandable. In fact, I will suggest that even Hutcheson's changing concept of the virtuous man, especially as he conceives him in the 'System', is largely the outcome of his realizing the implications of other aspects of his early philosophy, and not simply the outcome of the influence of other writers, as Scott tends to suggest.

Hutcheson's various ideas of the virtuous man need to be summarized as I have not emphasized this aspect of his thought so far. In the 'Inquiry', Hutcheson saw the virtue of the virtuous man as consisting in sociable and kindly impulses directed towards the good of those people immediately around the agent. Thus, such impulses as the love of one's children, compassion, gratitude towards benefactors, etc. were viewed as the essence of moral goodness; the virtuous man was he whose behaviour was motivated by such impulses. The word 'impulse' is not a misnomer for these feelings; as I discussed in Chapter 4 above, on this early view it is not clear whether these virtuous aspects of a man's personality are thought of

as passions or desires. In the 'Inquiry', it is the possessing of the sort of benevolence I characterized in Chapter 4 as the 'first version' of benevolence which typified the virtuous man. This type of benevolence is characterized as being particular and directed towards people around the agent, and by being a type of, or possibly closely connected with, feelings.

In his second book, the 'Essay' and 'Illustrations', Hutcheson conceived of the virtuous man not as being motivated by specific benevolent impulses, but as being motivated by a calm, general, and well considered benevolent desire towards mankind at large. In other words, the virtuous man is no longer a man of generous feelings, but a man who calmly and rationally considers the needs of others and who then, perhaps without much emotion at all, proceeds to try and achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers. I have discussed this second version of benevolence at greater length in Chapter 4, section ii. There I mentioned the influence of Bishop Butler on Hutcheson at this period of his life, but I would like to suggest that it is improbable that Hutcheson would have been so readily susceptible to Butler's influence unless he had at least some realization of the weaknesses of his first version of benevolence.

In the 'System', Hutcheson's ideal of the virtuous man again changes. He retains as part of his new ideal the notion of calm rational benevolence which was central to the concept of the virtuous man in his second book, but he now adds to it another dimension. Calm benevolence now takes second place to the striving for perfection. To some extent, perfection of one's character consists in getting calm benevolence to dominate one's personality and to motivate most

of one's actions; but this does not change the fact that the ideal to be striven for is personal perfection, not (or at least not directly) the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers. I will argue in this chapter that this change in the nature of the idea of the virtuous man was caused by considerations which are internal to and implied by Hutcheson's earlier theory. In fact, the notion of the virtuous man in the 'System' is the result of Hutcheson's realizing certain implications of his earlier theory.

But before proceeding to expand on these points, I will here complete the survey of Hutcheson's various notions of the virtuous man by mentioning how the concept appears in Hutcheson's last book.<sup>2</sup> The notion of the virtuous man presented in the 'Introduction' can only be described as Stoical. This Stoicism, especially the desire for perfection, was already present in the 'System', but the 'Introduction' greatly expands on the other tenet of Stoicism, the desire for "life according to nature". In some of the details, Hutcheson may have changed the Stoical ideal slightly; in particular he tends to depart from the more austere versions of Stoicism by giving physical pleasure a place in the good life, but he does at least relegate such pleasure to the lowest position. So in spirit, if not in detail, the concept of the virtuous life in the 'Introduction' is Stoical.

Stoicism as an ethical theory has, I think, two central tenets, and Hutcheson agrees with both. I also think it easy to see why, given Hutcheson's earlier philosophy, he would be inclined to accept these tenets. The first tenet is that the field of all human

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2. I accept Scott's contention that the 'Introduction' was probably written after the 'System'; cf. Scott, p. 244-248.

endeavours to gain happiness, perfection, or virtue ought to be the person's own personality and character. The nature of human beings, and the nature of the world, is such that the only possibility of achieving happiness is to direct one's activity inwards, and to strive to control one's wants, desires, feelings, and pleasures. It is easy, I think to see that his acceptance of this doctrine is the culmination of Hutcheson's growing awareness of the implications of his earlier doctrine that the desire for virtue is the desire to have certain desires and to control our other desires. But how far Hutcheson has moved from the position of his earlier writings can be seen by comparing this notion that virtue consists in acting so as to perfect one's personality and his earlier theory that virtue consists in promoting the greatest happiness of others.

But Hutcheson has not completely abandoned the notion of benevolence as a virtue; he has only demoted it from its all-important position as the whole of virtue. To see how it remains in his new ideal, one must examine the second central tenet of Hutcheson's new Stoical ideal, and introduce the notion of "life according to nature". Trying to mould one's personality to nature consists in perfecting all of one's abilities and powers as far as is possible without upsetting the natural balance and harmony that is inherent in the various aspects of the human character. This notion that each aspect of the human character has a proper or natural position with respect to the other aspects of the human character, must, of course, be explained further if this position is to be philosophically respectable. Hutcheson's discussion of this point reverts back to his earlier attempts to prove that one's greatest self-interest lies in the

pursuit of the greatest happiness of others. And herein lies the connexion between this new notion of the 'natural' personality and Hutcheson's earlier philosophy. He now wants to argue that structuring one's personality so as to obtain the greatest possible happiness for oneself will necessarily make one an ethical and politically useful member of society. This, of course, is because benevolence, the desire for the esteem of others, and other social impulses are not only inherent in human nature, but are our greatest possible sources of pleasure. And so benevolence has not disappeared from Hutcheson's ideal; it has merely become one of the central components of his new ideal of life according to nature. His earlier proof that self-interest and benevolence would lead to identical action has now become a proof that benevolence is an important part of the natural (and happy) life. The relation between happiness, virtue, and nature Hutcheson sums up in this passage:

"the same therefore is the summary notion of happiness and virtue: to wit, "that we should love and reverence the Deity with all our soul, and have a steadfast good-will toward mankind, and carefully improve all our powers of body and mind by which we can promote the common interest of all;" which is the life according to nature."  
(Introduction, p. 64)

This completes the summary of the development of Hutcheson's ideal of the virtuous man. I have shown how he moved from locating virtue in social impulses, through seeing virtue in calm general benevolence, and then in the perfecting of one's personality, to seeing virtue finally in life according to nature.

But before returning to discussing the moral sense as it appears in the 'System', it is, perhaps, convenient to complete here the discussion of the 'Introduction' by mentioning one final point, namely -

what has become of the moral sense? It has, in fact, become 'conscience'. In the 'System', as I will explain, the moral sense becomes a moral faculty which can generate the desire for moral perfection; thus in the 'System', the two central motivational impulses in Hutcheson's philosophy are joined by a third, the desire for perfection. In the 'Introduction', the moral faculty (i.e. conscience) does not so much generate a new desire, but rather is directly active in controlling and balancing all of our desires. Conscience is the highest faculty in our natures, and as such it should be the strongest and hence control and regulate all our other desires.

"But to regulate the highest powers of our nature, our affections and deliberate designs of action in important affairs, there's implanted by nature the noblest and most divine of all our senses, that conscience by which we discern what is graceful, becoming, beautiful and honourable in the affections of the soul, in our conduct of life, our words and actions." (Introduction, p. 18)

It is interesting to note that although this regulating faculty is far from the moral sense of his earlier philosophy, Hutcheson still calls it a sense, and talks of it 'discerning' what is honourable, etc. I do not see that he has made any effort to explain how these regulating and discerning roles are compatible. In this, his later writings, however forceful an image of the virtuous life they create, are less interesting philosophically.

To return to the 'System', the first thing that must be noted is that this is not a very well written book. Any thoughts one might have of finding in the 'System' a coherent and consistent ethical theory, or a theory of the standard of Hutcheson's first two books, are, I think, doomed to failure. Hutcheson was himself aware of this

fact. In a letter, he once said of writing the 'System': "but, as to composing in order, I am quite bewildered, and am adding confusedly to a confused book all valuable remarks in a farrago, to refresh my memory in my class lectures on several subjects."<sup>3</sup> But even if some confusion is to be expected in a book the author did not prepare for publication, and even if one allows for Hutcheson's self-admitted inability to systematize his later thinking, one still cannot but be surprised at some of the mistakes in this book. There are passages where Hutcheson seems to confuse concepts which he had gone to great lengths to distinguish in his earlier writings. For example, he manages to confuse the moral sense with benevolent desires, (System, p. 51-52), and throughout the book he is unclear on whether the moral sense is some sort of intuition, or feeling, or indeed desire.

This is unfortunate for there can be little doubt that Hutcheson's notion of the moral sense had changed by the time he wrote the 'System', but there must remain great doubt as to just what his new concept of the moral sense is. And it is the concept of the moral sense in the 'System' which needs discussing.

Underlying the changes in the conception of the moral sense is Hutcheson's growing realization of the implications of the fact that the objects of moral approval and disapproval (i.e. intentions or motives) are an internal or 'inward' aspect of one's personality;

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3. Scott, p. 114.

4. In fairness to Hutcheson, it must be added to this paragraph that two thirds of the 'System' deals with political philosophy and political economy, and that the merits of the book lie largely in those fields. I will be dealing only with Book I, p. 1-226.



they are not something external to one, such as the happiness of others. I have argued above<sup>5</sup> that Hutcheson had come to realize that if being motivated by benevolence is the characteristic whereby a virtuous action is virtuous, then the desire to do virtuous actions would be the desire to have benevolent desires. I also explained how Hutcheson thought we could encourage and increase the benevolent desires which are inherently in our make-up. Thus I have established that the criterion for the virtuousness of actions, and the scope of our endeavours to be virtuous, are internal to our personalities. In the 'System', Hutcheson is grappling with the implications of this position on the moral sense and on morality in general. However, it is not clear that he is entirely successful in these endeavours.

The first point to be made is that this explains how Hutcheson's new concept of the virtuous man, as one who strives for the perfection of himself, grows out of the implications of his earlier theory. If the scope of the desire to be virtuous (i.e. the desire to have benevolent desires) is internal, or, to use Hutcheson's phrase, concerns one's 'inward temper' (System, p. 46), then one who achieves virtue is one who attains a virtuous personality or temper. That is, the virtuous man is one who has perfected his character so that calm general benevolence is always his chief motivating desire. Thus one can easily see how Hutcheson's own theory has led from an ideal of benevolent impulses, to the ideal of the perfection of one's character.

But the problem now arises - what are the implications for the moral sense? If the virtuous man is one who perfects his nature, then surely the moral sense will approve of all attempts to achieve

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5. Cf. above, chapter 5.

such perfection. But so far in Hutcheson's philosophy, the moral sense has approved only of actions motivated by benevolence; it has never been conceived of as approving of attempts at personal perfection.

This, of course, is what lies behind Hutcheson's extension of moral approval in the 'System'. In his earlier writings, Hutcheson had conceived of the moral sense as conferring moral approval only on actions which were motivated by a desire to give pleasure to others. In the 'System', Hutcheson conceives of the moral sense as approving of three things:

Firstly, the moral sense approves of all actions motivated by benevolence. Thus this aspect of the moral sense remains unchanged.

Secondly, the moral sense approves of certain aspects of a man's nature which, though not actually benevolence or particular kind affections, "are naturally connected with such affections, natural evidences of them, and plainly inconsistent with the highest sorts of selfishness and sensuality." (System, p. 66). He gives as examples fortitude, candour, openness of mind, and sincerity, (System, p. 66). This extension of the moral sense is of little interest for our purposes, but it does indicate that Hutcheson had a richer conception of virtue than his earlier writings perhaps indicate, and that he was trying to adapt the moral sense to allow for this richness.

Thirdly, the moral sense now approves of a person having "an acute moral sense itself, a strong desire of moral excellence, with an high relish of it wherever it is observed." (System, p. 67). In other words, the moral sense now not only approves of benevolence, but also approves of the desire to have benevolent desires. That this meta-desire is the result of the moral sense itself, there can be no doubt:

"We do not call the power or (moral) sense itself virtuous; but the having this sense in an high degree naturally raises a strong desire of having all generous affections; it surmounts all the little obstacles to them, and determines the mind to use all the natural means of raising them.... And the consequent desire of moral excellence, the consequent strong love, esteem, and good-will to the persons where it is found, are immediately approved, as most amiable affections, and the highest virtues." (System, p. 67-68)

Thus the desire of desires which I discussed above at length in the chapter on moral motivation, has now become the desire of moral perfection, and is not only approved of by the moral sense, but is now the "highest virtue". This desire, however, continues to function as I described in Chapter 5 above.

This new notion of the moral sense approving of the desire for moral perfection requires comment. It will be remembered that Hutcheson in his earlier writings had viewed the desire to have benevolent desires as being a self-interested desire generated by the prospects of the pleasures of self-approbation. In the 'System', the self-interested nature of the desire of moral desires has vanished completely; in fact, Hutcheson now explicitly denies that the desire of moral perfection has anything to do with self-approbation, (System, p. 77). No reason is given for now believing his former opinion to be wrong, but Hutcheson does say something about how the moral sense can generate desires without using the mechanism of desiring the pleasure of self-approbation. He now suggests that the moral sense can encourage desires simply because it has the power and authority to do so; "And thus, where the moral sense is in its full vigour, it makes the generous determination to publick happiness the supreme one in the soul, with that commanding power which it is naturally destined

to exercise." (System, p. 77).

This notion that the moral sense can 'command' or generate desires whose object is to encourage or discourage other desires leads us to the second major change Hutcheson made in his philosophy while writing the 'System'. He now introduces the idea that the various aspects of one's personality are ordered in a hierarchy, and that some of our desires are 'superior' to others. Hutcheson is not very clear on how this hierarchy or structure arises, nor is he very explicit on why he thinks he has to introduce it. I have suggested in the previous paragraph that the reason why he needs this concept, is to explain how the moral sense can generate desires which are not self-interested; he needs these desires to be non-self-interested so that the moral sense can morally approve of them. Thus the two major changes in the 'System', the introduction of the notion of a hierarchy of desires, and the extension of the moral sense to include approval of the desire for moral perfection, are connected, though it is not clear just how aware Hutcheson was of this.

This notion of hierarchy is difficult to make clear, for Hutcheson himself is not at all clear on the issue. What he wants to do is to abandon the mechanical way in which the strength of desires is relative to the degree of pleasure and pain which will result from their satisfaction,<sup>6</sup> and to introduce the notion of the authority of desires. That is, he wants to make the authority (and motivational force?) of desires independent of their strength as previously conceived. He then, of course, wants to argue that the desires of the moral sense have greater authority than other desires. This

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6. Cf. above, chapter 2.

abandoning of his previous notion of the strength of desires looks like a move away from the hedonistic element in his early philosophy, but let us look at his arguments for this new notion of the authority of the moral sense.

His first argument, if it can be called an argument, is that the superiority of the moral sense is immediately apparent:

"This moral sense from its very nature appears to be designed for regulating and controlling all our powers. This dignity and commanding nature we are immediately conscious of, as we are conscious of the power itself. Nor can such matters of immediate feeling be otherways proved but by appeals to our hearts." (System, p. 61)

His second argument is more interesting, but re-introduces the hedonistic method of arguing which characterizes so much of Hutcheson's earlier writings on desires, and which he seems now to be trying to get away from. He argues that the pleasures of the moral sense are superior to other pleasures because the degree of other pleasures is diminished by the knowledge that sacrifices have been made to obtain them, whereas the pleasures of being virtuous are increased the more we have sacrificed to virtue.<sup>7</sup> This may or may not be true, (one can think of examples indicating either), but whether the argument is valid or not, it should be noted that Hutcheson is arguing that the pleasures of the moral sense are superior because they can lead to greater overall pleasure.

These two related changes in the moral sense, its authority and commanding position, and its approval of actions motivated by the desires which its new authority generates, still leaves one central question unanswered. If my interpretation of the connexion between

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7. Cf. System, p. 61-62.

these changes is correct, then there is a major gap in Hutcheson's overall argument. He has argued that the pleasures of the moral sense are superior, and that the moral sense has an inherent authority as the result of that; and he has argued that the moral sense approves of the actions it motivates; what he has still not established is how a 'sense', which the moral 'sense' is supposed to be, can motivate actions or generate desires. This large gap in the argument, which seems to threaten the coherence of the whole presentation in the 'System', is hidden behind a change of terminology. The 'moral sense' has now become the 'moral faculty'. This use of the word 'faculty' allows Hutcheson to conflate the perceptive-cum-feeling aspects of the old moral sense, with the authoritative, commanding, and motivational aspects he now wants to add. But arbitrarily dumping all these functions into one faculty will not solve the problem of their relation to each other, or the problem of their compatibility. Nor have I any suggestions to make on this topic in the context of Hutcheson's earlier analysis of human nature; I do not see how this new faculty is compatible with his earlier separation of desires, sensations, beliefs, etc., as described above in Chapter 2. It is this gap which makes the new extended and authoritative moral faculty difficult to view coherently.

### Concluding Assessment

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a critical examination of Hutcheson's moral theory using criteria external to that theory. I hope that I have been able to highlight the weaknesses which are internal to his theory, but perhaps I should end by standing back and reflecting on how successful Hutcheson's overall project has been.

The central point of Hutcheson's endeavours was to try and trace the origins of moral approval, and of virtuous actions, to some aspect of human nature. To fulfil this task, he began by analysing human nature, claiming that we have direct internal awareness of our own natures. For this purpose, he uses three categories: sensation, desires, and beliefs. Although Hutcheson is immensely ingenious at using this framework to describe the vagaries of human nature, I think in the end one must admit that human nature is too complex to fit into these simple categories. Can we really do justice to our natures by viewing sense perception, reflection, feelings, pleasures and pains, emotions, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows all as the same sort of thing? Surely that is a superficial analysis of human nature.

But over-simplicity is not the only accusation that the twentieth century is wont to throw at an eighteenth century account of human nature; the nature of Hutcheson's project itself must be questioned. Hutcheson has attempted in his study of human nature, to answer his questions by introspection and reflection; he repeatedly refers to these methods as proving his points. How satisfactory is introspection as a method of investigating these questions? We must, I think, reply that it is not very satisfactory in itself. To mention only one fatal

criticism, we cannot establish by introspection whether an attitude is inherent in our nature, or culturally determined. And, of course, many thinkers now question how much direct awareness of our natures we have. But in Hutcheson's defence, one might note that reflection is not totally useless in understanding ourselves; indeed it would seem that some reflective knowledge must be contained in any account of human nature.

In answer to his quest for the origins of moral evaluation, Hutcheson discovered that he possessed a moral sense. Is an adequate account of morality in terms of a moral sense possible? Hutcheson's main failure when attempting this project derives from his oversimplified account of human nature. The fact that he lumps together sense perception and feeling as the same sort of thing, allows him to include in the notion of the moral sense both moral judgements and moral emotions. But simply combining these two aspects of morality into one faculty (and Hutcheson later adds to this faculty the power of controlling our personality), does not solve the problem of the relation between moral judgements and moral feelings. In fact, it confuses the issue, for it obscures the differences between these two obviously different aspects of morality. The intuitionists have suggested an analysis of morality in terms of one of these aspects, and the emotivists have offered an analysis in terms of the other, but Hutcheson has merely befuddled the issue. This is probably the weakest point of his theory.

Hutcheson thought he had found not only the origin of moral approval; he also thought he knew which aspect of human nature motivated virtuous actions; namely benevolence. Whether or not the



virtue of actions lies in the motives from which they are done, is today still a debated point, though few would deny that the motive is relevant at least for the assessment of the agent. But Hutcheson himself came to realize that all the various complexities of human virtue could not be analysed in terms of the single motive of benevolence. His concept of human virtue developed during his life, but at no point could benevolence alone do justice to its richness. And so for this reason, and for other reasons inherent in his thought, in his later works he extended the motives for virtuous actions to include, amongst other things, a desire for personal perfection.

The contention that benevolence could motivate human action involved Hutcheson in an attempt to refute the psychological egoists (i.e. those who claimed that self-interest was the motive for all actions). The fact that the arguments he used in this attempt are very familiar today, should not lead one to ignore the merits of Hutcheson's presentation. After all, he is one of the eighteenth century writers who familiarized philosophers with these arguments. For example, he used the point which is often attributed to Butler, that the pleasure of satisfying a desire cannot be the object of that desire, because the pleasures of satisfaction must presuppose the desire. I think his refutation of the egoists is one of the stronger points of Hutcheson's writings, but is perhaps of less interest to philosophers at the moment.

The aspect of his philosophy which both has the most merit and is of the most interest today, is his solution to the problem of how moral knowledge can motivate virtuous actions. I suggested that this problem will arise in any theory which locates the criterion for

virtue in the motive from which the action was done, so Hutcheson's solution to the problem is of interest outside both his theory of benevolence and his theory of the moral sense, and should be of interest to contemporary philosophers. However, it may be difficult to get a proper hearing for a theory which values the striving for human perfection in an age that locates the origins of all human imperfection in the imperfections of society, and wants to discuss only social solutions to all problems.

Besides criticizing the egoists, Hutcheson also attempted to criticize the rationalists. But in this he was, I think, much less successful, largely because his interpretation of the rationalists was rather narrow. He interpreted them as trying to reduce moral ideas to other, non-moral ideas, such as truth, which are usually associated with the faculty of reason. His refutation of this sort of reductionism is able. A related topic is not without consideration in recent philosophical literature, for the general question of the reduction of moral to non-moral ideas is often discussed today, although seldom with reference to the particular reductions which Hutcheson considered.

But the question of reductionism is not the only issue between Hutcheson and the rationalists. The debate was reopened by Price's criticisms of Hutcheson. Price maintained that moral ideas are simple and unanalysable, (a proposition which Hutcheson also held and was perhaps the first to do so), but that these ideas are perceived by reason and not by a sense. There is more at stake in this debate than a quibble about the name of the faculty which perceives moral ideas. Price wished to maintain, in opposition to Hutcheson, that

moral truths are necessary and independent of human nature, and that morality inheres in the actions themselves. The best defence of Hutcheson against this sort of criticism is to criticize Price, for the success of Price's project is highly questionable. However, Price does put his finger on a number of weak points in Hutcheson's theory. For example, what is the relation for Hutcheson between the ideas of good and benevolence? On the other hand, some of Price's criticisms are wide of their mark; Price misses, for example, Hutcheson's explanation of the influence of the moral sense on our actions.

All in all, I think that Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense is unacceptable without such extensive revision that it would be unrecognizable. However, I think that Hutcheson's philosophical abilities are such that his presentation of these theories makes it easier to see why this is so.

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